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SECRET WARS

BY
JONATHAN HICKMAN

STEFANO CASELLI · MIKE DEODATO JR. · ESAD RIBIĆ · KEV WALKER

SECRET WARS

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LETTERER: VC's CORY PETIT

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COLOR ARTISTS: FRANK MARTIN & DAVID CURIEL
LETTERER: VC's JOE CARAMAGNA

AVENGERS #36, #38, #40 & #42
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LETTERER: VC's CORY PETIT

NEW AVENGERS #25 & #31
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COLOR ARTISTS: FRANK MARTIN WITH DAVID CURIEL (#25)
LETTERER: VC's JOE CARAMAGNA

AVENGERS #37, #39 & #41
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COLOR ARTIST: FRANK MARTIN
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LETTERER: VC's JOE CARAMAGNA

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LETTERER: VC's JOE CARAMAGNA

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COLOR ARTIST: FRANK MARTIN
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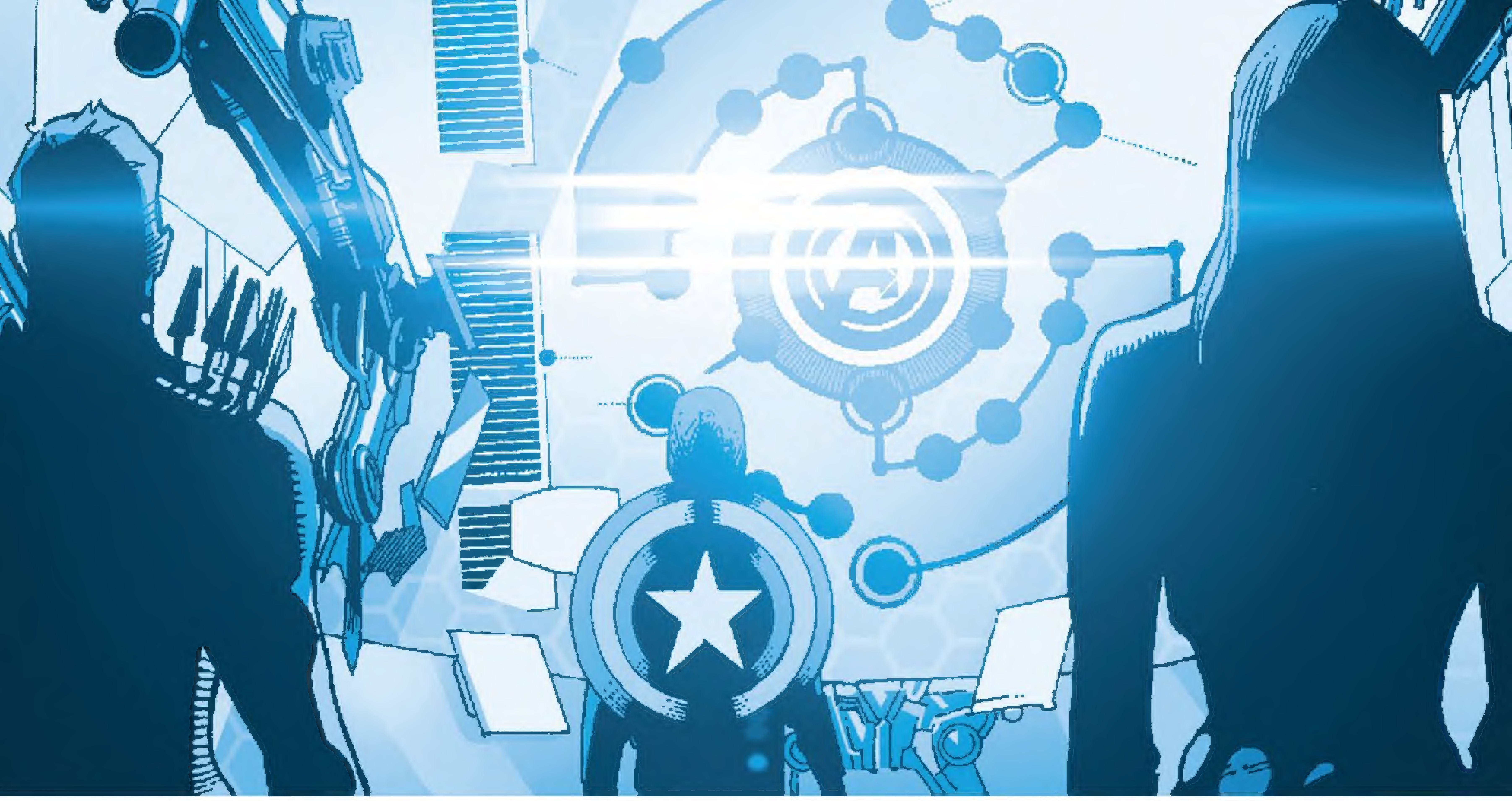


“THE THREE AVENGERS”

PREVIOUSLY IN AVENGERS

IT STARTED WITH TWO MEN. IT STARTED WITH AN IDEA.
EXPANSION.
THE WORLD WAS EVER MORE DANGEROUS, THREATS MORE FREQUENT, ENEMIES ENDLESS.
SO THEY WERE SUMMONED. NEW PLAYERS. SPECIFIC PEOPLE FOR SPECIFIC NEEDS.
THEY TORE DOWN WHAT THEY HAD AND BUILT A NEW MACHINE TO ACHIEVE THEIR EXPANDED GOALS.
AND THEN...THEY ASSEMBLED.
THEY WERE AVENGERS.
BUT ANOTHER GROUP, THE ILLUMINATI, BELIEVED THEY KNEW BETTER. THEY BELIEVED IN THE OPPOSITE OF EXPANSION...THEY BELIEVED IN SECRECY.
BETRAYALS, LIES AND DECEIT DESTROYED THE IDEA.
THE IDEA BEGUN BY TWO MEN.
ONE WHO WAS LIFE.
AND ONE WHO WAS DEATH.

IRON MAN
STEVE ROGERS
EX NIHILO
HULK
HAWKEYE
CAPTAIN AMERICA
AVENGERS
THOR
CAPTAIN MARVEL
HYPERION
NIGHTMASK
MANIFOLD
SPIDER-WOMAN
ABYSS
SMASHER
CAPTAIN UNIVERSE
BLACK WIDOW
STARBRAND
CANNONBALL
SUNSPOT
SHANG-CHI

EIGHT MONTHS LATER

THE ALPHA WHAAN SYSTEM.
CORE REACTIONS ARE BECOMING UNSTABLE.
WE'RE LOSING IT.
NOT YET. WE CAN HOLD IT.
SING, BROTHERS AND SISTERS, *SING!*
IT IS THE SUN--LIFE-GIVING-- IT WANTS TO LIVE. IT HAS TO--
NO.

FIVE. FIVE EX NIHILII GONE. SUCH A HIGH COST...
AND FOR WHAT? ANOTHER FAILURE...ANOTHER DEAD STAR.
I DON'T UNDERSTAND WHY WE--
YES, YOU DO, EX NIHILO...
THE STARS ARE SPEAKING CLEARLY, YOU ALL JUST REFUSE TO BELIEVE THE STORY THEY TELL.
THEY WANT TO DIE.
SO THEY *DO*.

THAT CANNOT BE, ABYSS. ALPHA WHAAN WAS A YELLOW DWARF. IT HAD A REMAINING NATURAL LIFE SPAN OF SEVERAL BILLION YEARS.
AND THERE WAS NO TAMPERING WITH IT--NO FOREIGN EXOTIC MATTER--IT JUST *CHOSE* TO END.
I HAVE BEEN TELLING YOU THAT THE VERY FABRIC OF THE UNIVERSE IS COLLAPSING--DIMINISHING SPACETIME.
I SEE IT, LIKE A GRID, TWISTING IN ON ITSELF. SWIRLING AROUND A COALESCING CENTER THAT HAS FINALLY FOCUSED INTO A SINGLE POINT.
CARE TO GUESS WHERE THAT IS?
AH, GLORIANA! EARTH!
I LOVE EARTH. FULL OF WONDER AND POSSIBILITY--I TWINNED IT MYSELF, EX NIHILA. DUELING ECOSYSTEMS.
WE SHOULD DESTROY IT.
BAH!
AT THE VERY LEAST...WE HAVE TO FIND OUT WHY IT LIES AT THE CENTER OF THIS. WE HAVE TO FIND OUT...AND WE HAVE TO STOP IT.
WE DON'T HAVE MUCH TIME, EX NIHILI...
PLANETS, STARS, EVEN THE UNIVERSE ITSELF... *ALL OF THIS* IS COMING TO *AN END.*

BLARG! BLARG!
SHOULD WE DO SOMETHING ABOUT THAT ALARM?
BLARG! BLARG!
JUST WAIT FOR IT, MANIFOLD.

BLARG! BLARG!
PANG!
BLARG! BLARG!
KRSH
SAMUEL.
BLARG! BLARG!
BOBBY!
BLARG! BLARG!

BLARG! BLARG!
UFFF!
GOOD TO SEE YOU TOO, MAN.
BUT, HEY, MAYBE TURN OFF THE ALARM?
BLARG! BLARG!
RIGHT.
GOD, I HATE THIS THING, I CAN NEVER--
BLORP
BLARG! BLARG!
CRAP, IZZY'S GONNA KILL ME.
KSSH
BLARG! BLAAAAARR
THERE YOU GO. ALL BETTER.
HEY! NICE SUIT.
THANKS.
SOME OF US WORK FOR A LIVING.
IT REALLY IS GREAT TO SEE YOU GUYS.
EDEN...YOU KEEPING THIS FELLA STRAIGHT? YOU KNOW HE LIKES TO GET INTO TROUBLE. DOES A PRETTY GOOD JOB OF DRAGGING OTHERS WITH HIM, TOO.

HONESTLY, I DON'T HAVE ENOUGH FREE TIME ANYMORE TO FIND A HINT OF IT.
I'M TOO BUSY ACTING AS A LIAISON FOR A.I.M. AND OUR SECRET PRO--
HOLD ON A SECOND.
DID YOU JUST SAY YOU WERE WORKING WITH *A.I.M.?*
BOBBY, WHAT IN THE WORLD HAVE YOU GOTTEN INTO?
TURNS OUT THAT IF YOU RUN A SUPER-EVIL SCIENCE CLUB LIKE A LARGE CORPORATION, YOU'RE JUST AS VULNERABLE TO A HOSTILE TAKEOVER AS ANYONE ELSE.
SO I BOUGHT A.I.M.! THEY'RE ACTUALLY A PRETTY DECENT GROUP OF PEOPLE ONCE WE GOT RID OF THE MANAGEMENT. BUT NONE OF THAT REALLY MATTERS...
WHAT MATTERS IS IT'S TIME TO COME HOME, SAM. I NEED YOU.
ATTENTION!
BE ADVISED THAT THIS AREA IS NOW UNDER QUARANTINE.
DO NOT ATTEMPT TO ESCAPE. DO NOT ATTEMPT TO RUN.
WHAT IN THE--
IT'S *THE IMPERIAL GUARD.*
GOD, THOSE GUYS OVERREACT TO EVERYTHING.

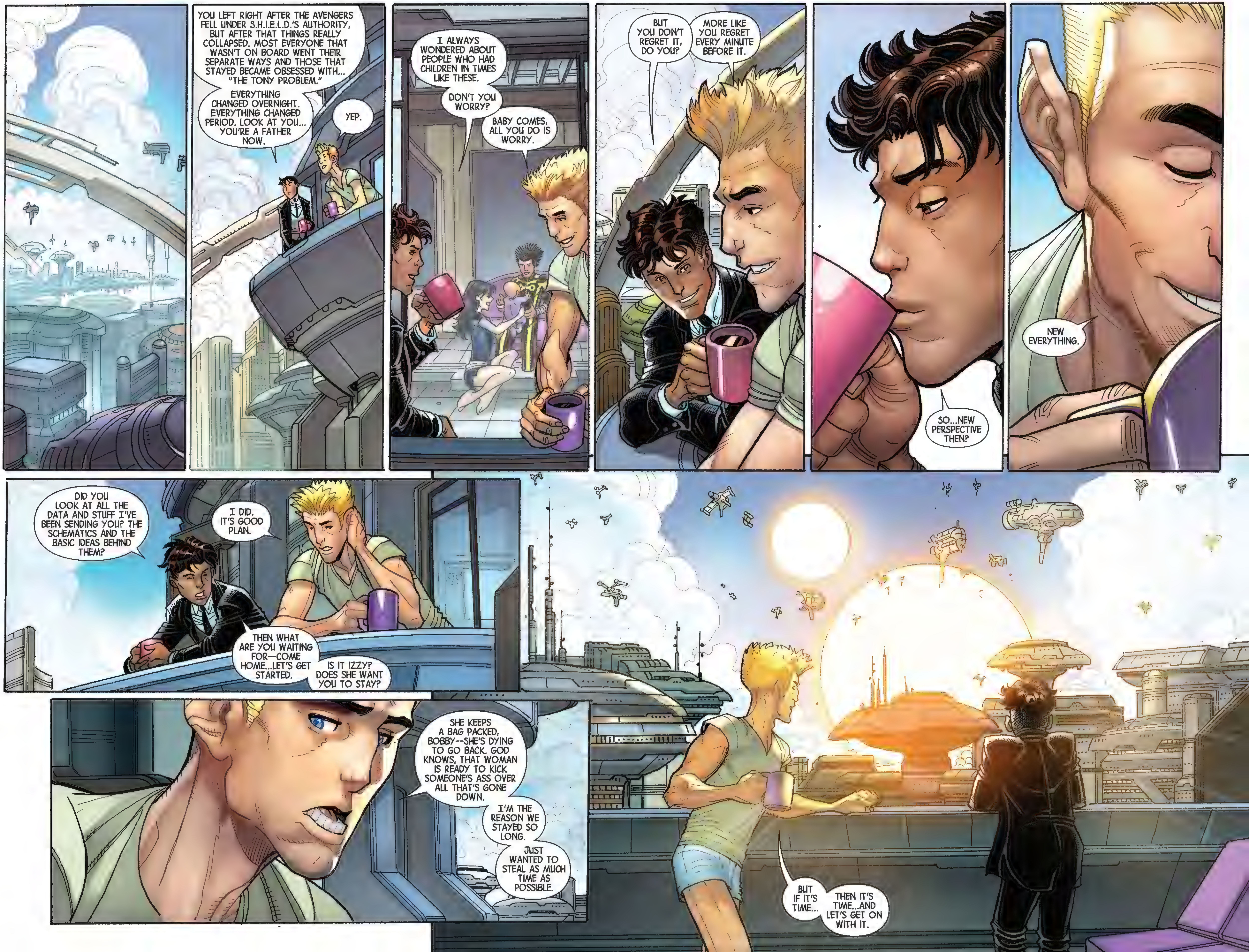
WELL... THEIR HOUSE, THEIR RULES, BROTHER.
YOU'RE THE ONE WHO CHOSE TO LIVE ON ANOTHER PLANET.

LATER.
ALL WE'RE ASKING IS THAT YOU CLEAR ANY TYPE OF PAN-DIMENSIONAL OR TRANSLOCATED ARRIVAL WITH THE GUARD BEFORE THEY ARRIVE.
OF COURSE.
BECAUSE WE HAVE VERY SENSITIVE SHIELDING AND--
YES, I UNDERSTAND AND I'M SORRY. WON'T HAPPEN AGAIN.
GOOD. BECAUSE I WANT TO STRESS JUST HOW SENSITIVE--
I HOPE YOU PEOPLE ARE HAPPY.
YOU WOKE THE BABY.
THE BABY WOKE THE MOTHER. DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA HOW TIRED I AM?
THAT'S WHAT WE DO, ISN'T IT LITTLE GUY... WE CAUSE A RUCKUS.
HEY, IZZY...
YES, ROBERTO?
WHAT'S WRONG WITH HIS FACE?
IT'S GOOD TO SEE YOU AGAIN TOO, BOBBY.
BUT WHY ARE YOU HERE?

THE ORISIAN FIELD.
WHERE IS IT?
TWENTY METERS. IT'S BEHIND YOU, STARBRAND, OVER YOUR RIGHT SHOULDER. BE CAREFUL...
HE'LL BE CYCLING IN THREE...TWO...
ONE.

SEE? NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT, NIGHTMASK. THAT WAS THE LAST ONE. THESE OLD MODELS DON'T STAND A CHANCE AGAINST US NEWER SYSTEMS.
BUT I THOUGHT ALL THESE *ALEPHS* WERE DONE WHEN THE BUILDERS LEFT THIS UNIVERSE.
THEY WERE...
WHICH IS WHAT MAKES THIS SO INTERESTING.
KRT3BRT NZRT9B
AH!
THAT EXPLAINS THAT.
I'M ACCESSING ITS CORE AND TRANSFERRING THE DATA TO YOU, BUT I'M PRETTY POSITIVE THESE DIDN'T ORIGINATE IN *OUR* SLICE.
COMPRESSION PROBLEM?

YEP. CHECK OUT THE LAST RECORD BEFORE IT SLIPPED BACK INTO OUR SPACE.
BUILDER FRIGATE TRYING TO CUT THROUGH THE BLEED.
I'M SURPRISED ANYTHING MADE IT THROUGH.
I'D FEEL BAD IF THESE THINGS WEREN'T SUCH COLOSSAL JERKS.
BUT WHY WOULD THEY EVEN TRY? THE BLEED IS A DEAD ZONE NOW.
MAYBE THEY WERE RUNNING FROM SOMETHING WORSE THAN DEATH. TOTAL ERASURE? I WONDER...
BE-DOOP
...HOPE YOU RECEIVE THIS...SOONER THAN...FIGURED IT OUT...COLLAPSE OF MULTIVERSE...NEED YOU TO...HOME... SOON...
OH, MAN...I REALLY DON'T WANT TO GO BACK TO EARTH AND THOSE... PEOPLE.
BUT SUNSPOT AND THE REST-- THEY NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THIS, AND IF IT'S WHAT WE THINK, THEN THEY NEED TO KNOW WHAT WE'RE GOING TO DO AS WELL.
SO WE SHOULD GO NOW?
WELL, YOU'RE NOT GETTING ANY YOUNGER.
BUT...I *AM* GETTING YOUNGER.
IT'S A JOKE.
"I DON'T JOKE, KEVIN."
"THAT'S WHAT MAKES IT FUNNY, ADAM."


YOU LEFT RIGHT AFTER THE AVENGERS FELL UNDER S.H.I.E.L.D.'S AUTHORITY, BUT AFTER THAT THINGS REALLY COLLAPSED. MOST EVERYONE THAT WASN'T ON BOARD WENT THEIR SEPARATE WAYS AND THOSE THAT STAYED BECAME OBSESSED WITH... "THE TONY PROBLEM."
EVERYTHING CHANGED OVERNIGHT. EVERYTHING CHANGED PERIOD. LOOK AT YOU... YOU'RE A FATHER NOW.
YEP.
I ALWAYS WONDERED ABOUT PEOPLE WHO HAD CHILDREN IN TIMES LIKE THESE.
DON'T YOU WORRY?
BABY COMES, ALL YOU DO IS WORRY.
BUT YOU DON'T REGRET IT, DO YOU?
MORE LIKE YOU REGRET EVERY MINUTE BEFORE IT.
SO...NEW PERSPECTIVE THEN?
NEW EVERYTHING.
DID YOU LOOK AT ALL THE DATA AND STUFF I'VE BEEN SENDING YOU? THE SCHEMATICS AND THE BASIC IDEAS BEHIND THEM?
I DID. IT'S GOOD PLAN.
THEN WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR--COME HOME...LET'S GET STARTED.
IS IT IZZY? DOES SHE WANT YOU TO STAY?
SHE KEEPS A BAG PACKED, BOBBY--SHE'S DYING TO GO BACK. GOD KNOWS, THAT WOMAN IS READY TO KICK SOMEONE'S ASS OVER ALL THAT'S GONE DOWN.
I'M THE REASON WE STAYED SO LONG.
JUST WANTED TO STEAL AS MUCH TIME AS POSSIBLE.
BUT IF IT'S TIME...
THEN IT'S TIME...AND LET'S GET ON WITH IT.

THE SAVAGE LAND.
THE REST OF THE TEAM WILL BE BACK TOMORROW. WE'RE SUPPOSED TO BE UP AND RUNNING THEN.
SO HOW ARE WE DOING ON TIME?
PRETTY GOOD, ACTUALLY.
THE PRINCIPLE'S BASICALLY THE SAME AS WITH PREVIOUS VERSIONS.
WE'RE ACCESSING A DEEPER, HOTTER VENT TO PROVIDE THE NECESSARY ENERGY, BUT IT'S ALL BASICALLY ECONOMY OF SCALE.
PROPORTIONALLY GREATER NEEDS MEAN A PROPORTIONALLY GREATER POWER.
HAVE YOU TESTED IT YET?
WE'RE GETTING READY TO DO A DRY RUN OF THE CONVERTER, BUT THAT'S REALLY NOT GOING TO GIVE US AN ACCUR--
WAIT, HOLD ON... HERE WE GO.

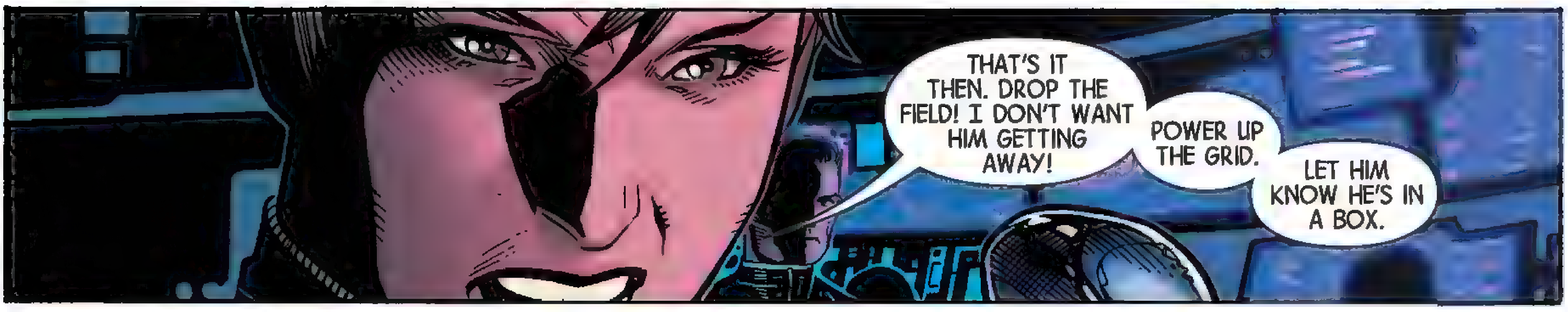
OKAY. EVERYTHING'S GREEN.
I'M POWERING ON THE TRANSFORMER AND ACCESSING THE VENT.
ZZAAKK
POWER SURGE!
SHUT IT OFF!
SHUT IT OFF!
"THAT WENT WELL."
HRMPT. IT'S TOUGH TO GAUGE BECAUSE WE'RE ONLY GOING TO GET ONE GO AT THE ACTUAL MACHINE, SO WE KEEP OVERLOADING THE TEST CONDUITS.
MAYBE IF WE DID IT IN A CYCLE, DUMP THE ENERGY INTO A LOOP...
I HAVE NO IDEA WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT...
JUST TRY AND HAVE IT WORKING BY THE TIME THE OTHERS RETURN. YOU KNOW HOW CERTAIN PEOPLE GET WHEN THEY THINK YOU ARE SPENDING THEIR MONEY UNWISELY.
YEAH. I KNOW HOW TO DO MY JOB, DAD.
FAIR ENOUGH. AND SPEAKING OF JOBS...HAVE YOU SEEN WHERE *THOR* IS TODAY?
I'LL GIVE YOU ONE GUESS.

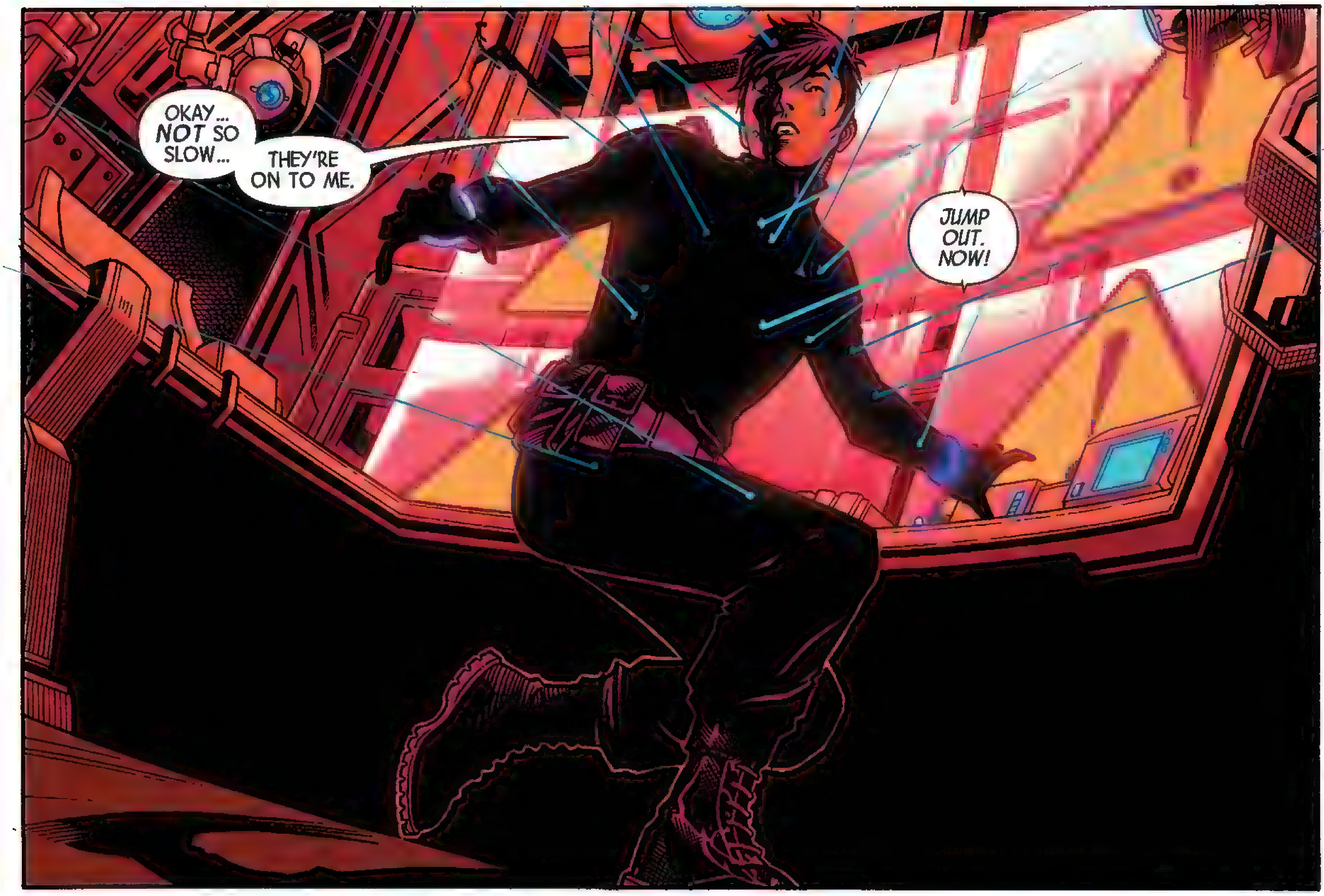
GOOD NEWS. THE MACHINE'S ALMOST DONE.
I MEAN...I CAN'T REALLY TELL THE DIFFERENCE, BUT THE SMART PEOPLE SEEM TO BE PRETTY SURE WE'LL BE READY TO GO SOON.
WHICH, ONE COULD ARGUE, IS CAUSE FOR SOME *CELEBRATION*.
AND I CAN SEE YOU'VE ALREADY STARTED.
YOU MIND SHARING THAT?
SURE.

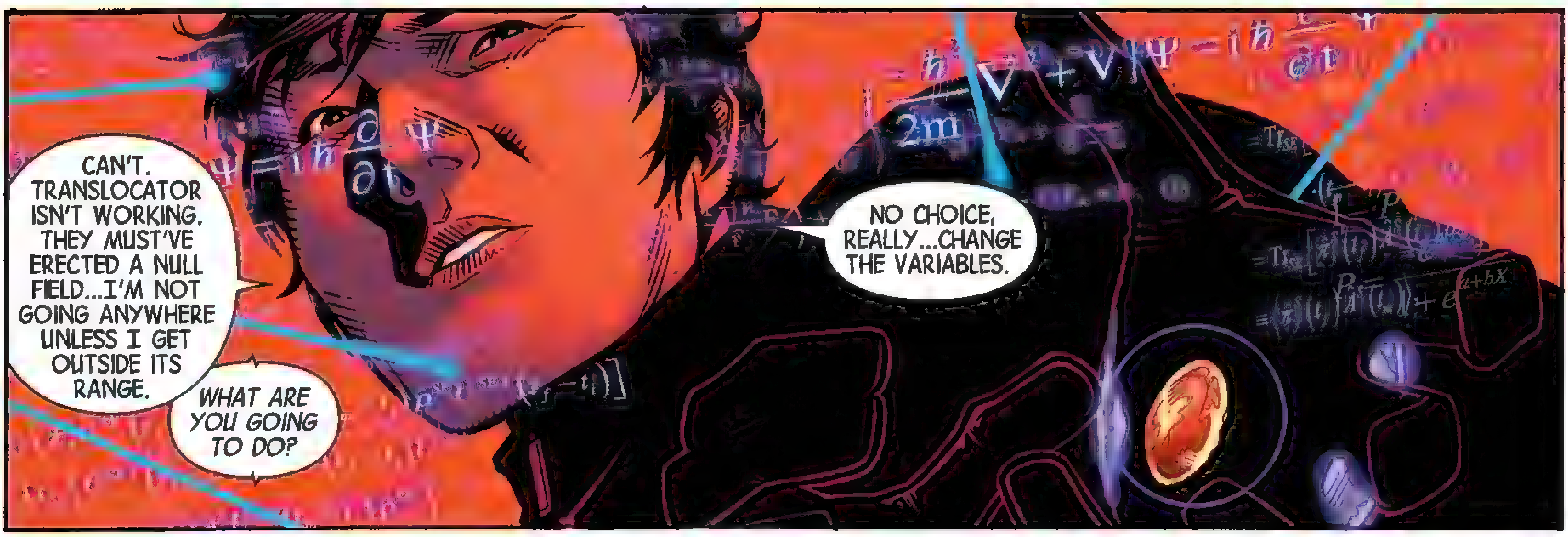
RIGHT NOW, THE PLAN IS JUST FOR YOU AND I TO GO THROUGH. THERE WAS TALK OF *POD* COMING AS WELL...
BUT I DON'T WANT THAT RESPONSIBILITY ON MY SHOULDERS. NOT WITH WHAT WE'RE BEING ASKED TO DO.
AGREED.
SO RIGHT NOW, IT LOOKS LIKE JUST YOU AND ME...INTO THE BREACH AND BEYOND. I THINK IT'S FITTING.
AS WE'VE BOTH BEEN TESTED AND, AT TIMES, BEEN FOUND WANTING. YOU HAVE SUFFERED. YOU HAVE LOST. I HAVE TOO.
BUT NOW, BROTHER...
NOW WE BOTH RISE.

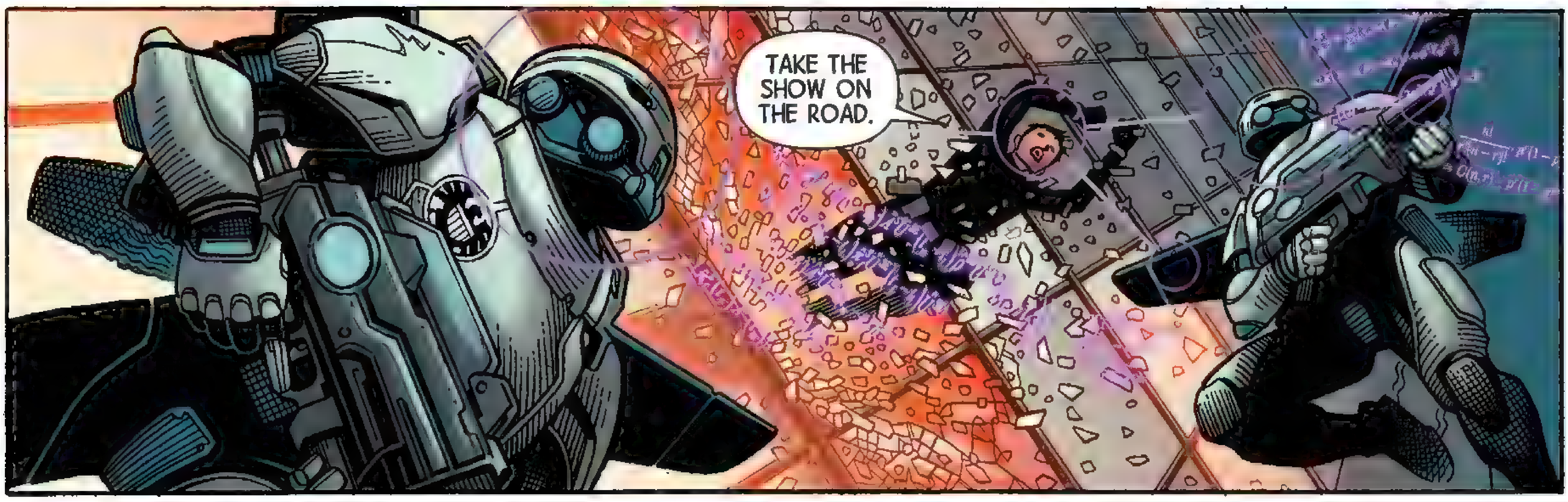
S.H.I.E.L.D. STATION: GOLGOTHA. (FORMERLY AVENGERS TOWER.)
STARK
ARCHANGEL COMMAND, THIS IS OVERWATCH. AS EXPECTED... WE HAVE ACTIVITY CONFIRMED INSIDE GOLGOTHA. SINGLE INTRUDER, I THINK. IT'S VERY HARD TO READ...
ACTIVATING A S.H.I.E.L.D. CONTAINMENT TEAM.
BELAY THAT... WE DON'T MOVE UNTIL WE HAVE CONFIRMATION.
EVERY DETECTION SYSTEM IN THE BUILDING WAS DEACTIVATED, DIRECTOR HILL...AND THE SUBJECT'S MIND IS LIKE...LIKE *QUICKSILVER*...
WELL THEN... TRY *HARDER*, SOLDIER...

"...ALL THE MONEY'S IN THE MIDDLE OF THE TABLE, SO I WANT TO KNOW *EXACTLY* WHO THAT IS BEFORE I DROP THE WEIGHT OF THE WORLD ON THEM."
WE'RE READY WHEN YOU ARE.
I'M IN THE LAB.
DATA LOOKS INTACT.
WE MAY HAVE LOST STARK, BUT WE'LL STILL HAVE ACCESS TO ALL HIS STUFF. COULD BE FUN TO TINKER WITH.
YOU READY TO RECEIVE?
SEND IT NOW.
BE-DOOP
ANY OTHER PROBLEMS?
NO. IT'S ALL QUIET HERE. A BIT *TOO QUIET...*
&%#@! NOW PROJECTING A PRETTY HIGH PROBABILITY THAT I'M TOAST.
ARE YOU SURE?
YEAH...BUT THE DATA'S ALMOST UPLOADED. ONCE THAT'S DONE, THEN I CAN JUMP OUT OF HERE...
"HOPEFULLY THE FASCISTS ARE RUNNING A LITTLE SLOW TODAY."
GOT HIM. IT'S ***AMADEUS CHO.*** SUPER-GENIUS WITH A STANDING ARREST-ON-SIGHT ORDER...JUST LIKE THE REST OF HIS FRATERNITY.
HE'S CONFIRMED: ***ILLUMINATI.***


THAT'S IT THEN. DROP THE FIELD! I DON'T WANT HIM GETTING AWAY!
POWER UP THE GRID.
LET HIM KNOW HE'S IN A BOX.


OKAY... *NOT* SO SLOW...
THEY'RE ON TO ME.
JUMP OUT. NOW!


CAN'T. TRANSLOCATOR ISN'T WORKING. THEY MUST'VE ERECTED A NULL FIELD...I'M NOT GOING ANYWHERE UNLESS I GET OUTSIDE ITS RANGE.
WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO?
NO CHOICE, REALLY...CHANGE THE VARIABLES.


TAKE THE SHOW ON THE ROAD.

OOOFFFF!
SORRY, OFFICER...
HE'S OUTSIDE THE BUILDING. ORDERING SECONDARY TEAMS TO CONVERGE.
NO. PULL EVERYONE BACK.
I'M SORRY, SIR?
"YOU HEARD ME. GET THEM ALL OUT OF THE WAY...
"ARCHANGEL IS SENDING IN THE BEST S.H.I.E.L.D. UNIT WE HAVE...
CRAP.

"...THE AVENGERS."
TARGET IN SIGHT...
HOW YOU WANT TO DO THIS?
ARTIE'S DISCOUNT
GIFTS
CERIES

STAY LOOSE. LET HIM THINK HE HAS OPTIONS.
BUT DON'T GIVE ANYTHING AWAY.
EVEN ENCASED AND BURIED THIRTY FEET UNDERGROUND...
I WOULD HAVE PICKED UP A POWER SOURCE LARGE ENOUGH TO EXTEND A NULL FIELD BEYOND ITS NORMAL LIMITATIONS.
SO I GUESS ALL I NEED TO DO IS BUY MYSELF FIFTEEN SECONDS TO CLEAR ITS RANGE.
TINK
COMMUNICATION INTERRUPT. WAR MACHINE DRONE A.I. OFF-LINE.
SLAVING TO SECONDARY SOURCE.
I COULD DO THAT IN MY SLEEP.

CAROL, LOOK OUT!
I'M FINE, HAWKEYE...
JUST RUNNING A LITTLE HOT.

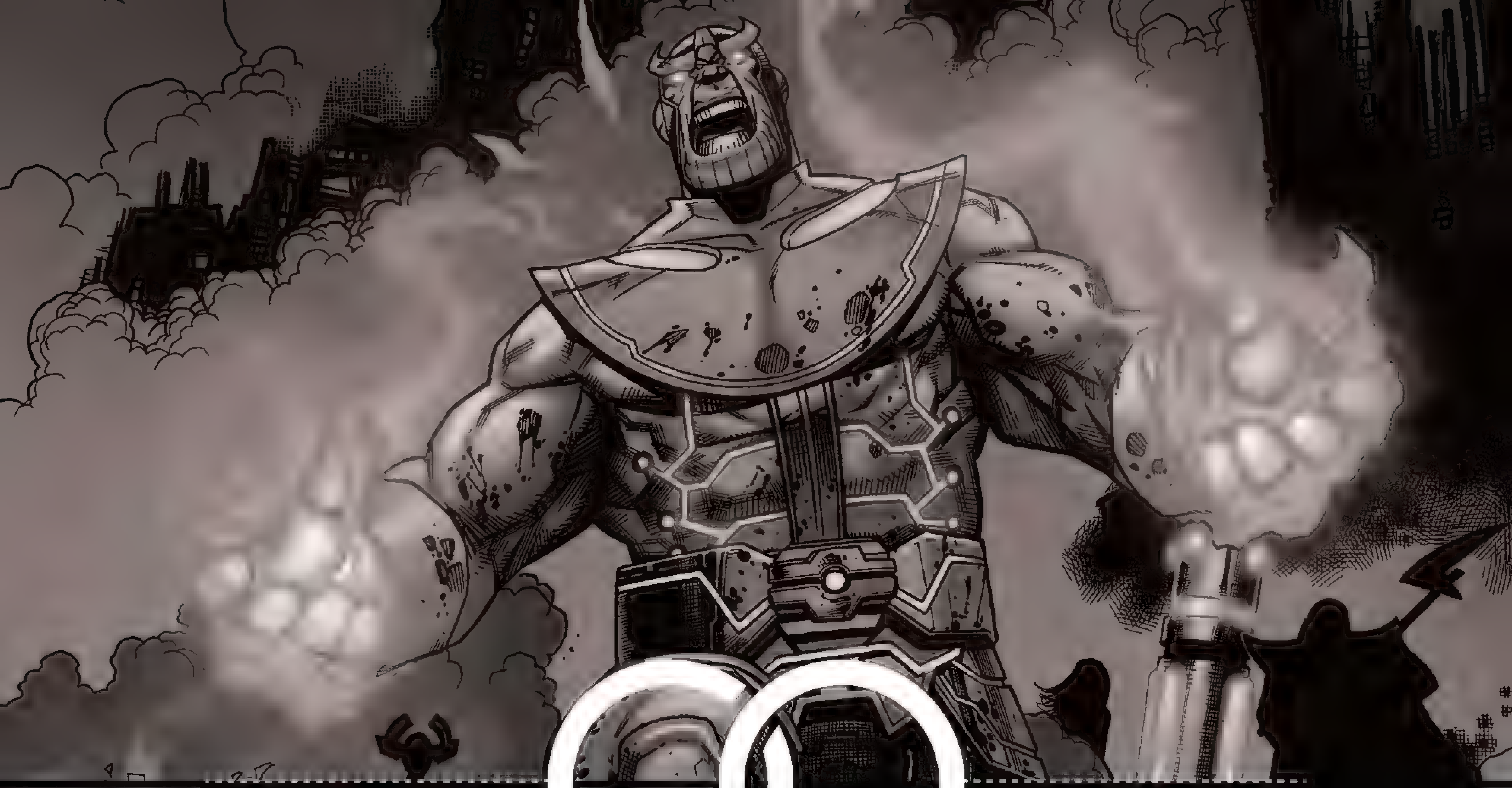
DON'T GET DISTRACTED.
REMEMBER, CHO'S SITUATIONALLY OPERATING AT SEVERAL MAGNITUDES BEYOND WHAT WE'RE CAPABLE OF. STAY ON TASK.
KEEP HIM OFF BALANCE FOR JUST A FEW MORE SECONDS.
"RETASKING DRONES."
SOMETHING'S NOT RIGHT HERE. THERE'S A PATTERN.
THEY'RE SHOWING ME A TRAP, THEN A PATH OUT THAT'S TOO LINEAR, JUST TO SNATCH IT AWAY...PRESENTING A SECONDARY... OH!
THEY'RE LETTING ME BOX MYSELF IN.
CRAP.

CONTAINMENT FIE-- ARGGH!

MY HAND.
CRUNCH
NO TRANSLOCATING OUT *THIS* TIME, CHO.
NO GETTING OUT PERIOD.
YOU WERE RIGHT...
YOU CERTAINLY KNOW HOW THESE PEOPLE THINK.
YES, I DO...
CLICK
AMADEUS CHO, IN ACCORDANCE WITH S.H.I.E.L.D. EXECUTIVE ORDER: 2081, YOU ARE BEING DETAINED UNTIL SUCH A TIME AS...
WELL, UNTIL I FEEL LIKE IT. OR UNTIL WE LEARN THE LOCATION OF YOUR ASSOCIATES. STARTING WITH *ANTHONY STARK*, IRON MAN...
I CAN'T HELP YOU, LADY. I DON'T KNOW WHERE HE IS.
NO ONE DOES--HE'S DISAPPEARED.

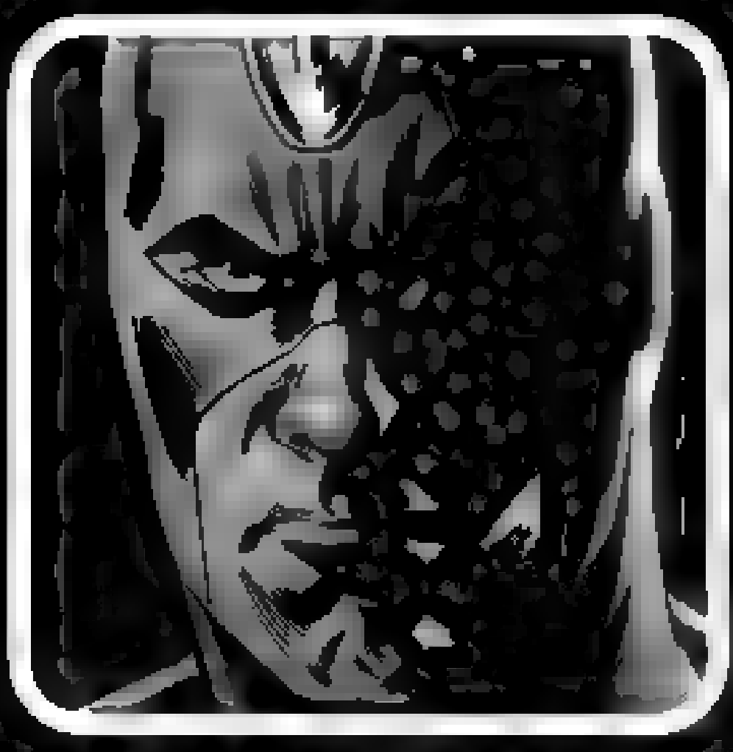
WHAT ABOUT BANNER? YOU KNOW, "DOC GREEN"?
NO COMMENT.
AND HANK PYM?
YOU KNOW WE'RE TRYING TO *SAVE* ALL OF YOU, RIGHT?
IF YOU HAD ANY IDEA HOW MANY TIMES I'VE HEARD THAT KIND OF EXCUSE...YOU WOULDN'T WASTE YOUR BREATH.
NOW. WHERE ARE BRIAN BRADDOCK AND STEPHEN STRANGE?
WHERE *ARE* THEY?
WHERE ARE HANK McCOY, T'CHALLA AND BLACK BOLT?
I'M NOT TELLING YOU A DAMN THING.
NOTHING.
YES, YOU WILL. I PROMISE...
YOU *WILL* TALK.
WHERE ARE THE ILLUMINATI HIDING, CHO?

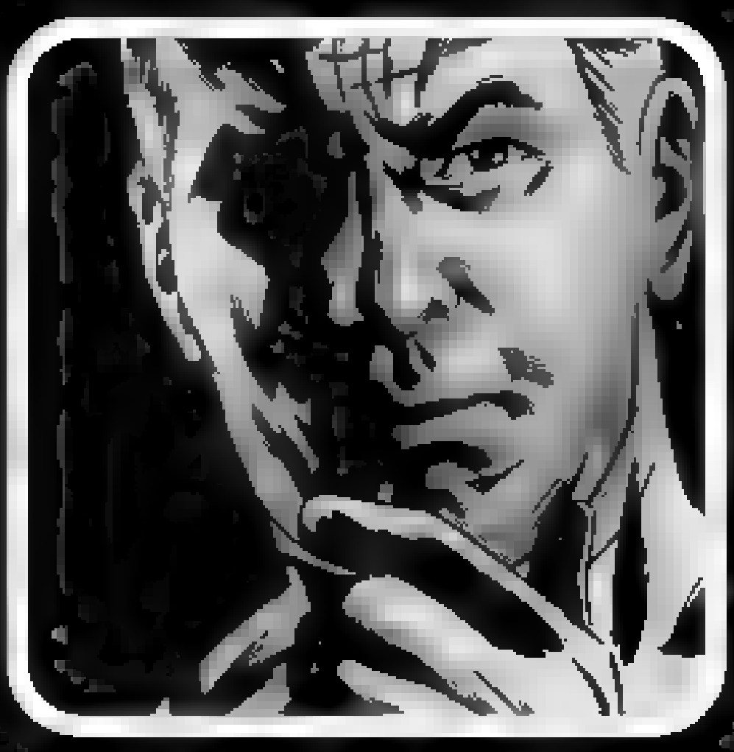
WHERE IS REED RICHARDS?
WHERE IS *MY HUSBAND?*

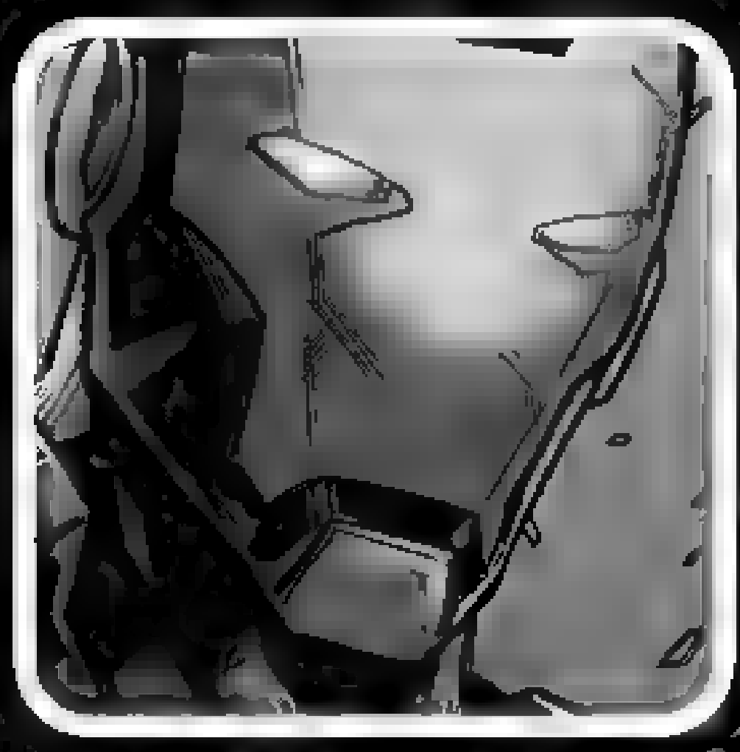


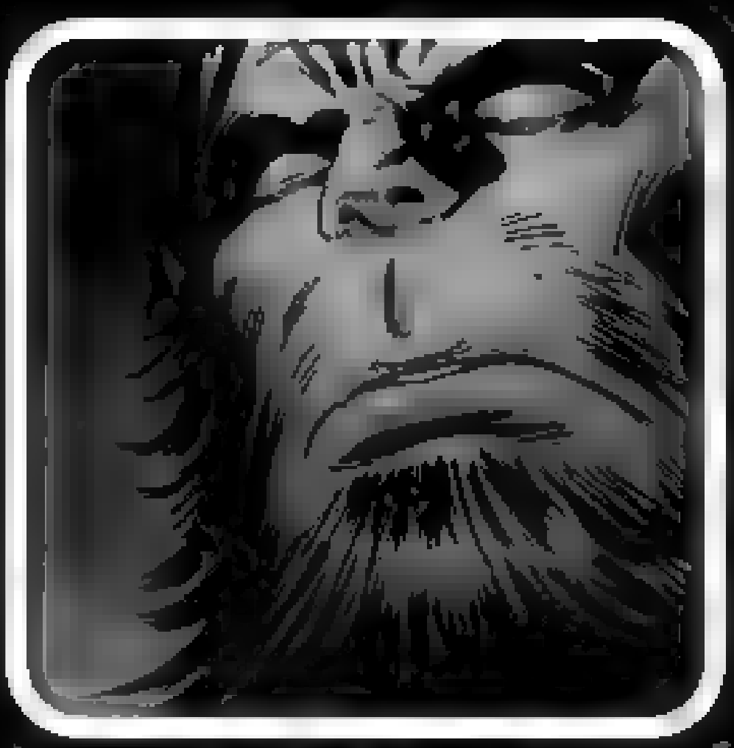
“THE CABAL”

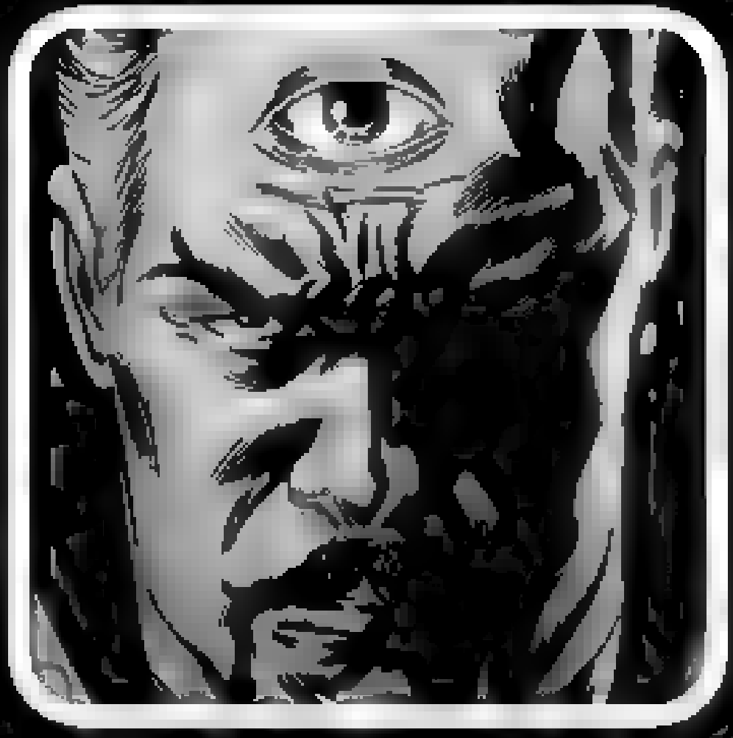
THE ILLUMINATI

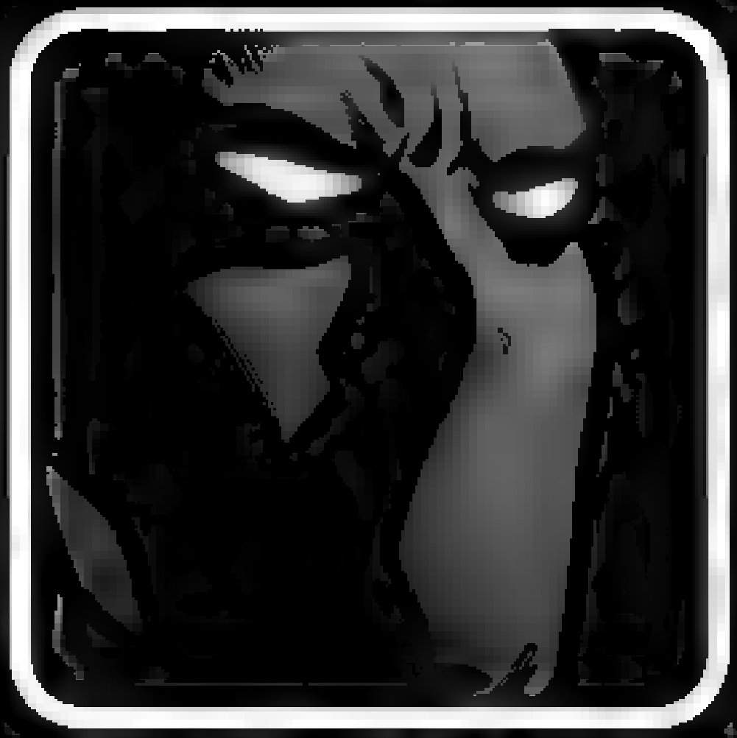

BLACK BOLT
Celestial Messiah

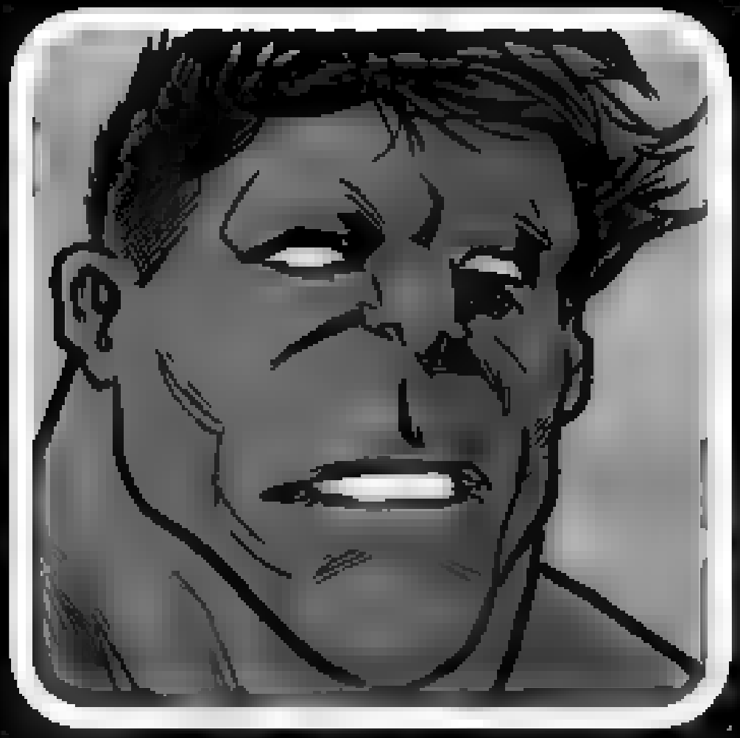

REED RICHARDS
Universal Builder

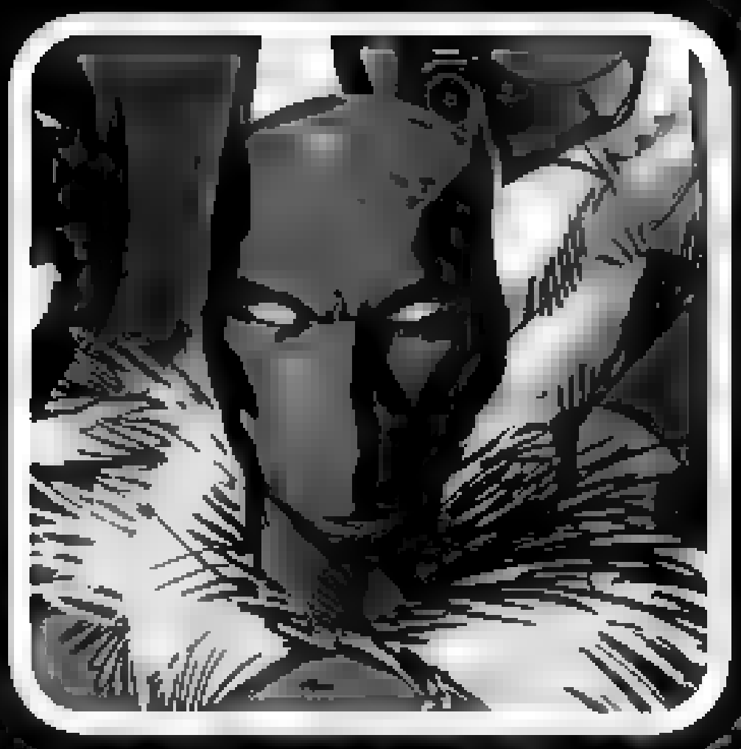

IRON MAN
Master of Machines

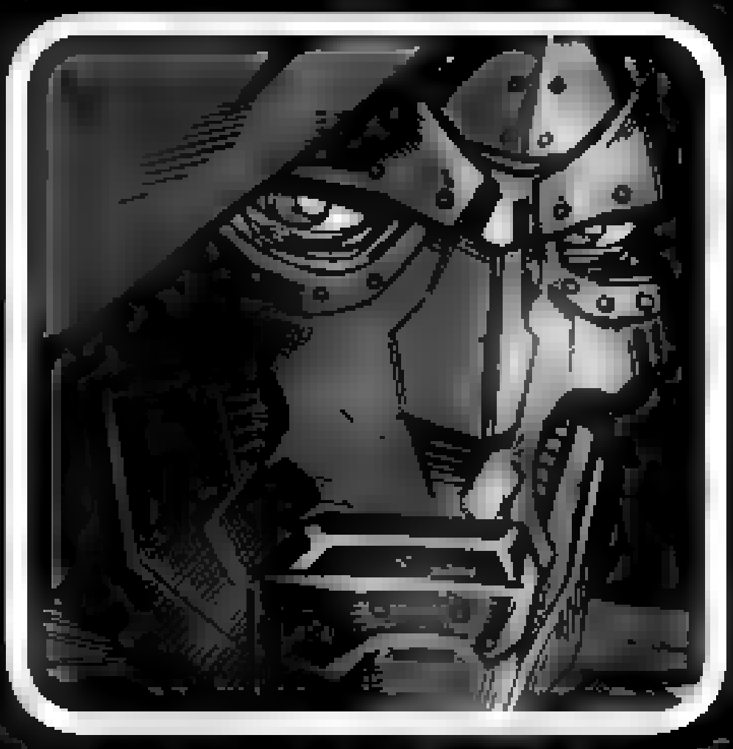

BEAST
Mutant Genius

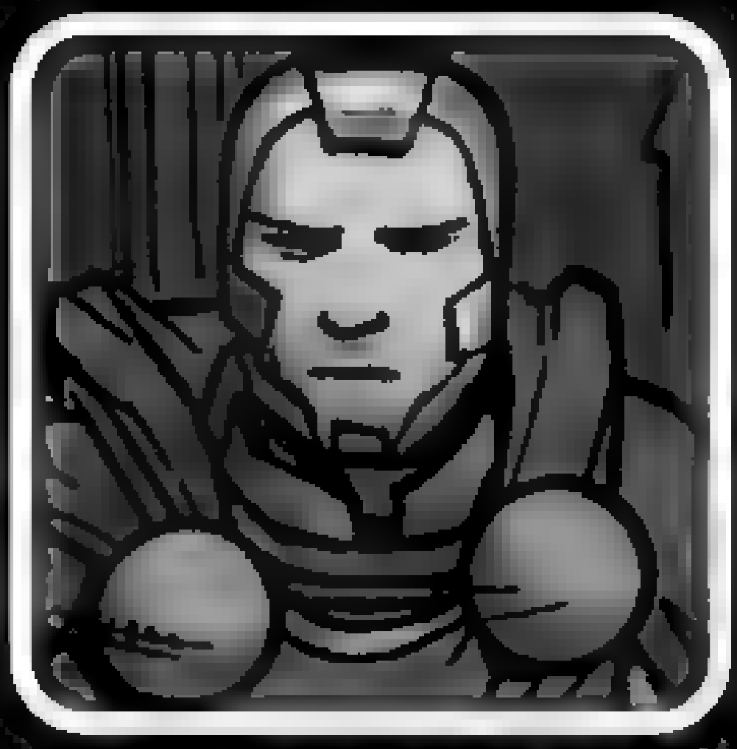

DOCTOR STRANGE
Sorcerer Supreme

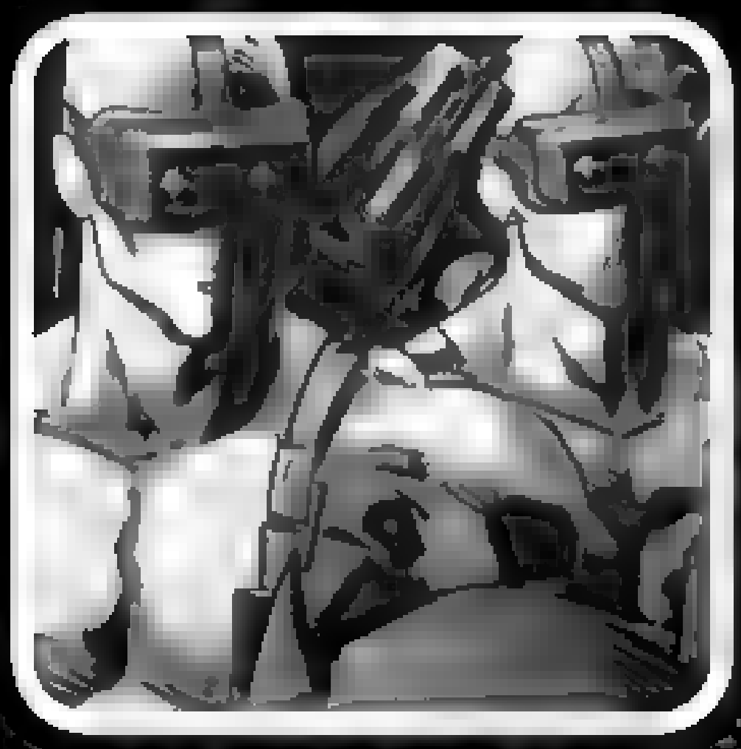

BLACK PANTHER
King of the Dead

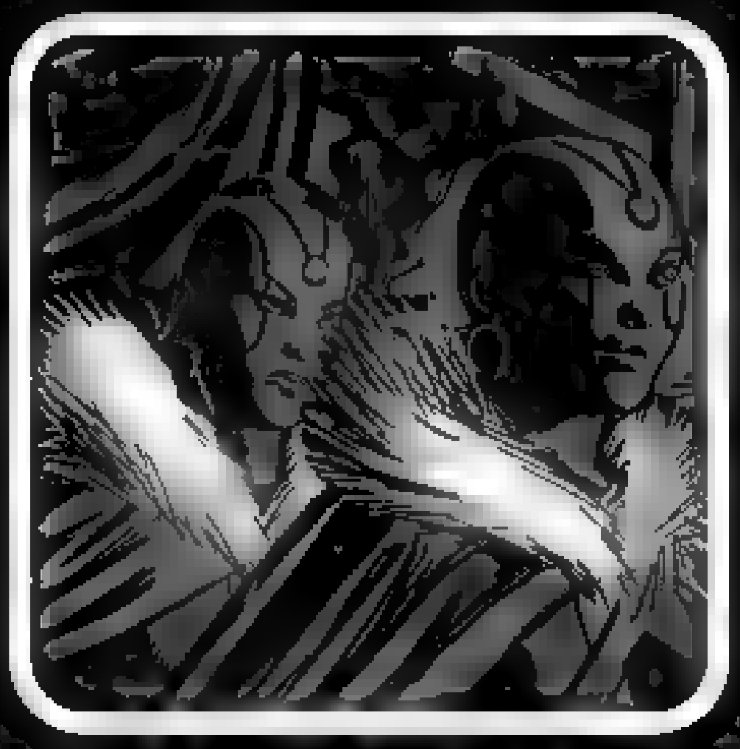

HULK
Strongest There Is


BLACK PANTHER (SHURI)
Queen of Wakanda

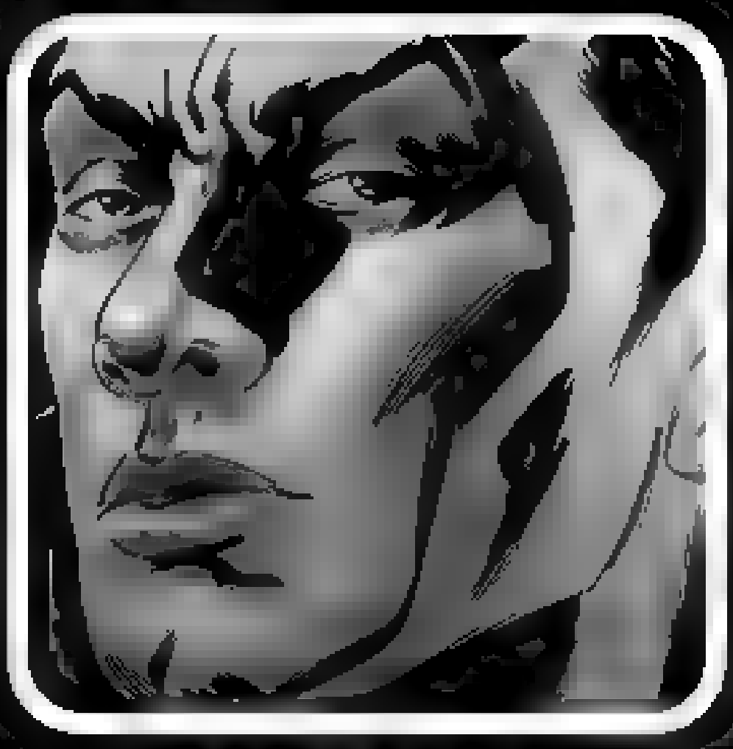

DR. DOOM
Ruler of Latveria

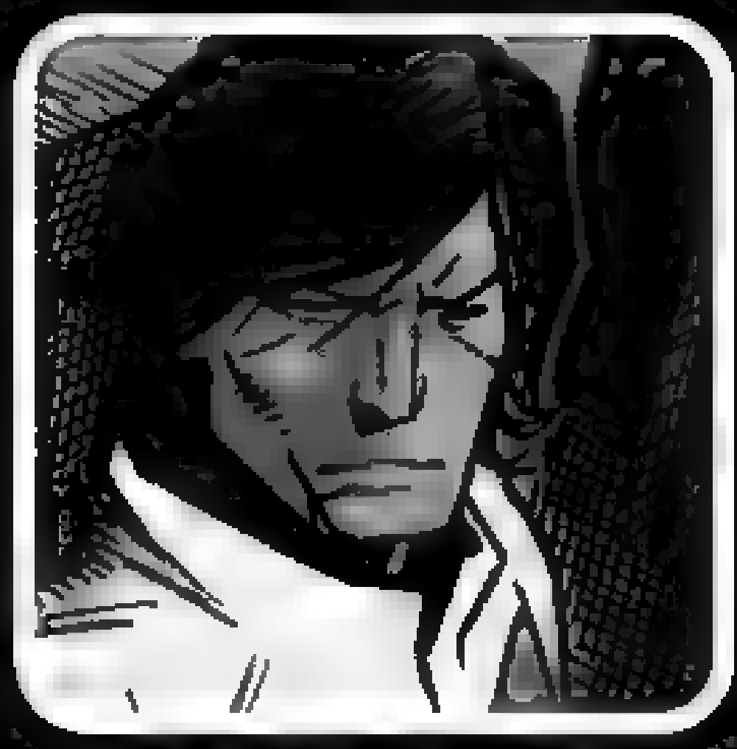

KRISTOFF VERNARD
Doom's Heir

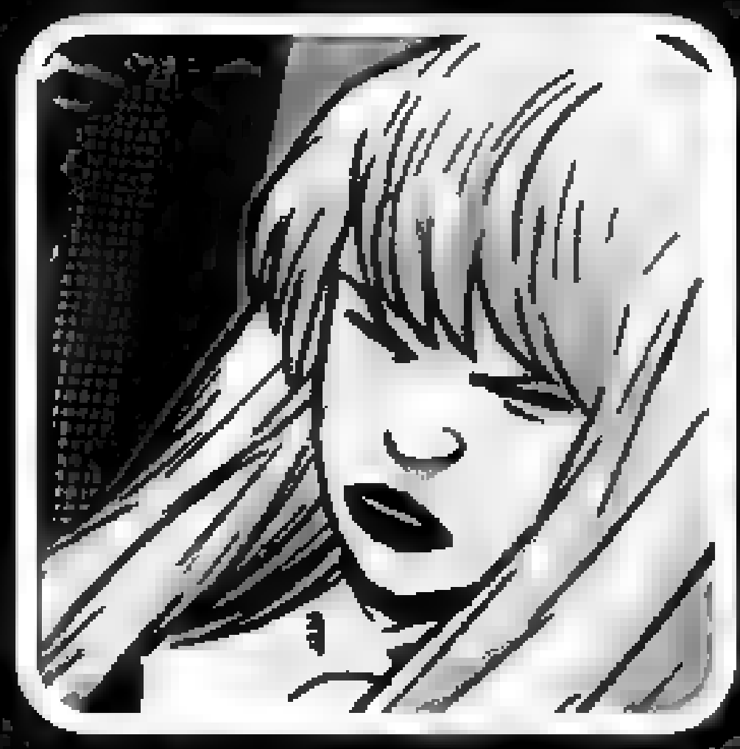

THE HATUT ZERAZE
Wakandan Strike Force

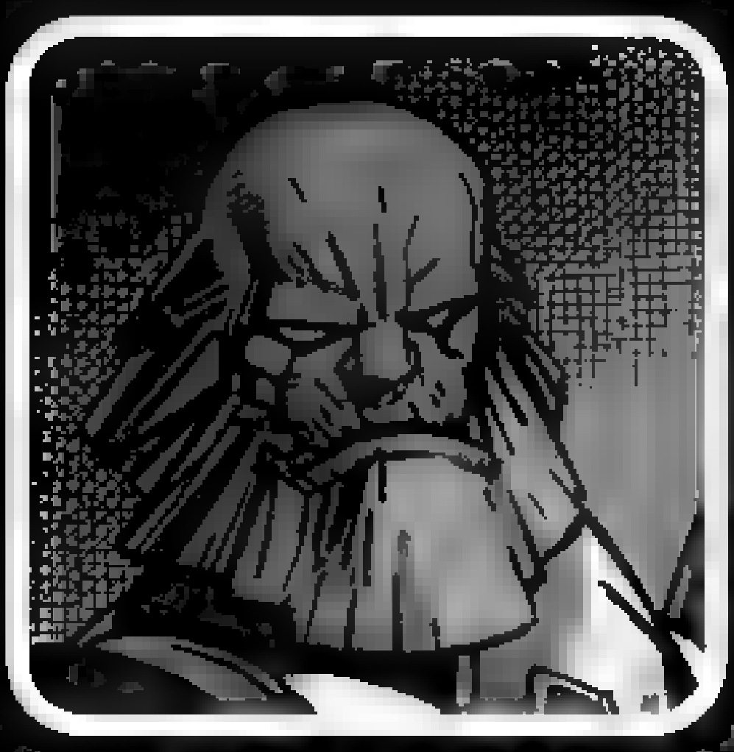

THE DORA MILAJE
Wakandan Royal Bodyguards

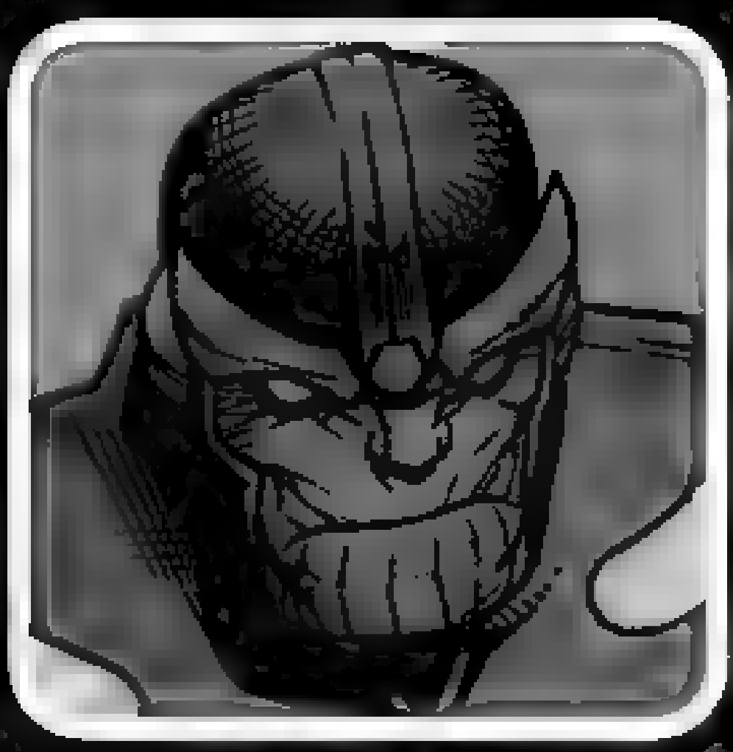
THE CABAL

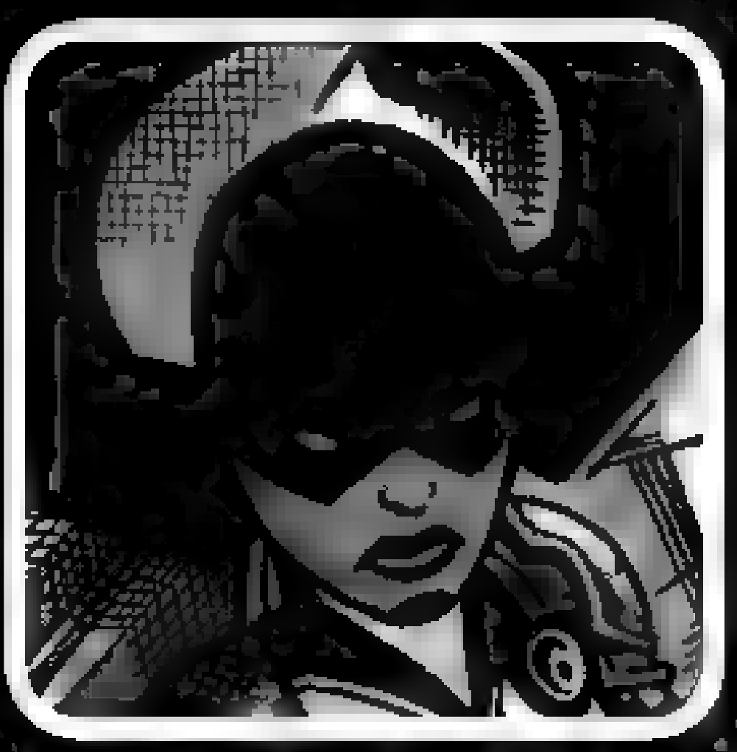

NAMOR
Imperius Rex

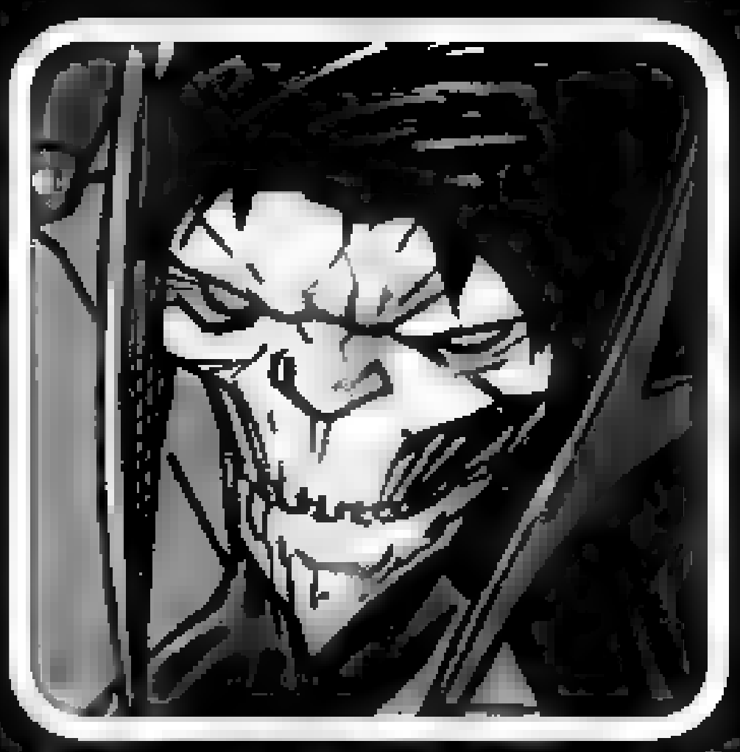

MAXIMUS
Inhuman Madman


BLACK SWAN
Incursion Survivor


TERRAX
The Truly Enlightened


THANOS
The Mad Titan


PROXIMA MIDNIGHT
Servant of Thanos

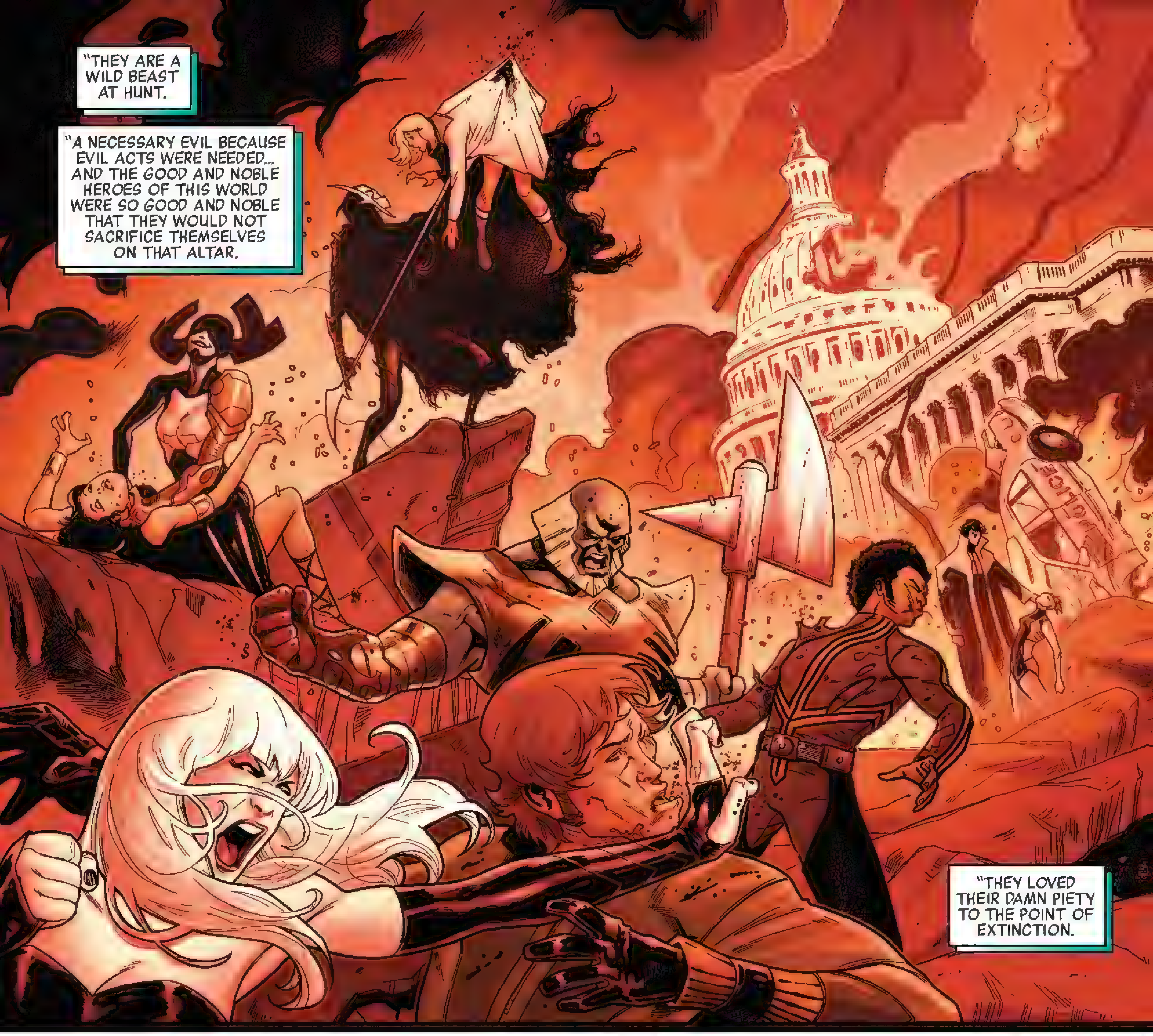

CORVUS GLAIVE
Destroyer of Worlds

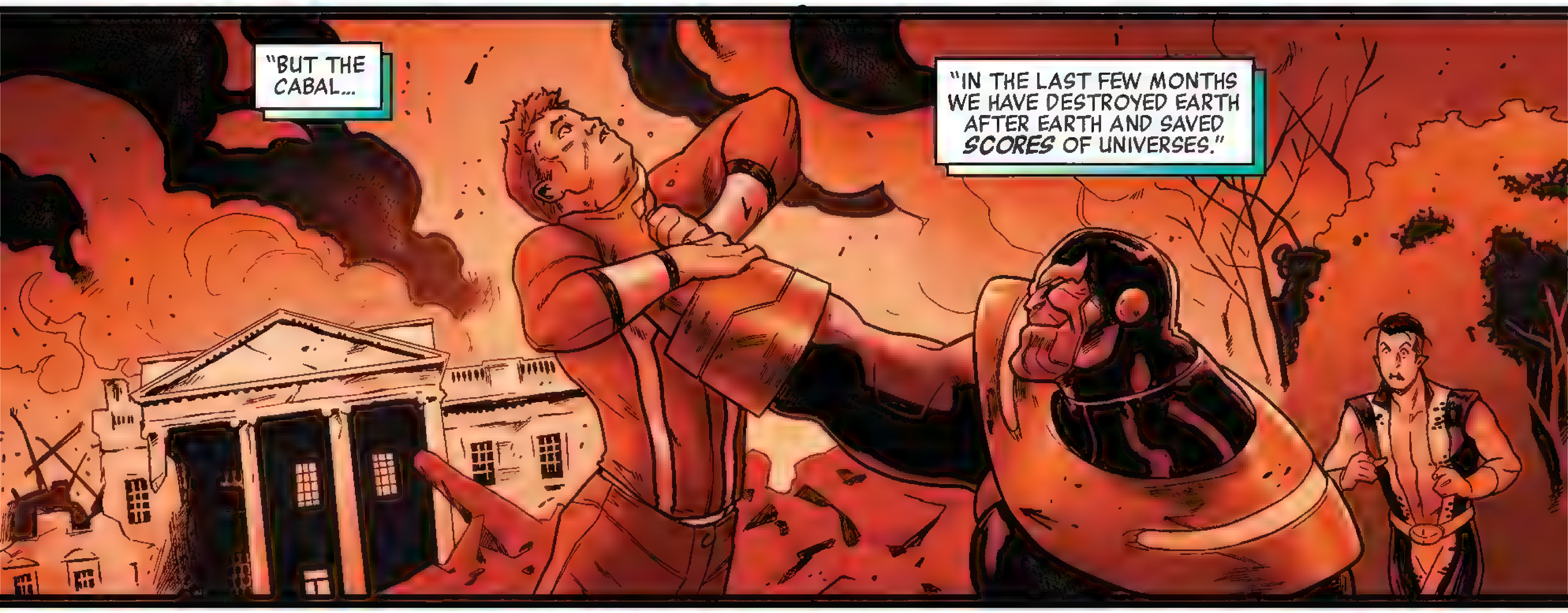
LATVERIA.
YOU'VE BARELY TOUCHED YOUR DINNER, PRINCE NAMOR.
IS SOMETHING WRONG?
NO, KRISTOFF. EVERYTHING IS... PERFECT.
OF COURSE, ONE WOULD EXPECT NOTHING LESS FROM CASTLE DOOM.
NO APPETITE THEN?
MORE OF AN EVOLVING PALATE. IT SEEMS I NO LONGER CRAVE THE FULL-BODIED TRAPPINGS OF THE WELL-HEELED.
THESE DAYS, SUCH SPOIL SEEMS INCREASINGLY DECADENT.
DON'T YOU THINK?

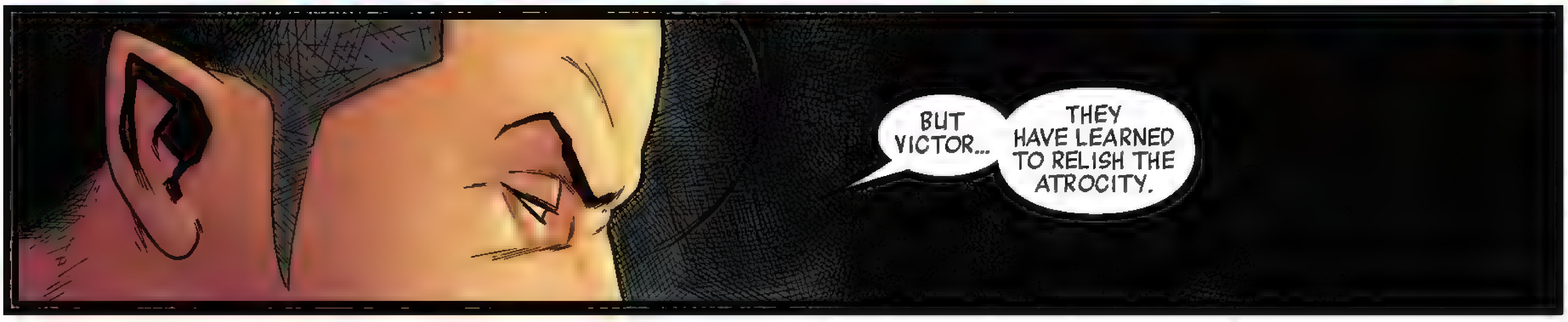
I DO NOT.
REALLY?
YOU DID UNDERSTAND WHAT I JUST TOLD YOU, YES? *THE THINGS* I HAVE BEEN *DOING?*
I DO.
EVERYTHING IS DYING, AND YOU FIND YOURSELF--OR PERHAPS BETTER PUT, *YOU PLACED YOURSELF*--AT THE VERY CENTER OF IT.
WE ARE *ALL* AT THE CENTER OF IT, VICTOR. EVERYONE AND EVERYTHING.
MY POINT IS REGARDING URGENCY: FORMAL DINNER WHILE THE WORLD BURNS SEEMS POINTLESS. IT SEEMS WASTEFUL.
BUT NAMOR, YOU MUST AGREE...
WE *ALL* HAVE TO EAT. REGARDLESS OF CIRCUMSTANCES.

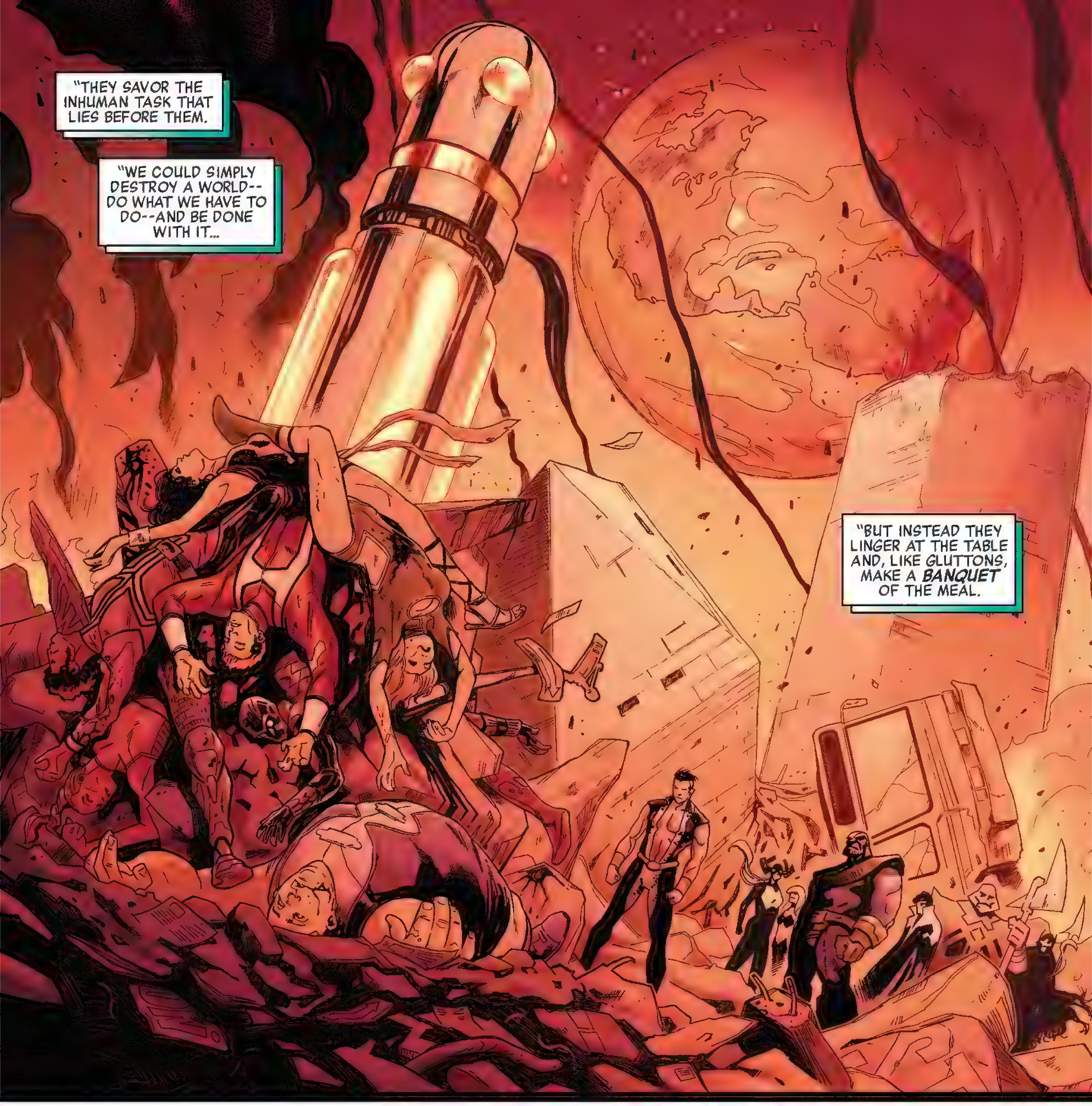
YES. ALL MEN. BUT ALL OF THIS...IS JUST FOR THE THREE OF US.
ARE THERE NOT PEOPLE IN LATVERIA WITH WHOM WE MIGHT SHARE IT? AS--WHAT'S THE SAYING?--
--YOU CAN'T TAKE IT WITH YOU.
I MUST SAY, THIS NEWFOUND TENOR IS QUITE A DEPARTURE FOR YOU.
ESPECIALLY CONSIDERING YOU--AND YOUR FRIENDS--SET YOURSELVES ABOVE ALL OTHER MEN. SO...IS IT SINCERITY SPEAKING, OR IS THIS YOUR FALL?
IT'S A TIME OF CHANGE, VICTOR.
THAT'S THE SENTIMENT OF A PLUTOCRAT, NAMOR.
THE SENTIMENT OF THE UNDESERVING NOUVEAU RICHE WHO FALL BACKWARDS INTO MONEY AND THEREFORE POWER. WE ARE NOT THAT...WE ARE ARISTOCRATS.
WE WERE BORN BETTER.

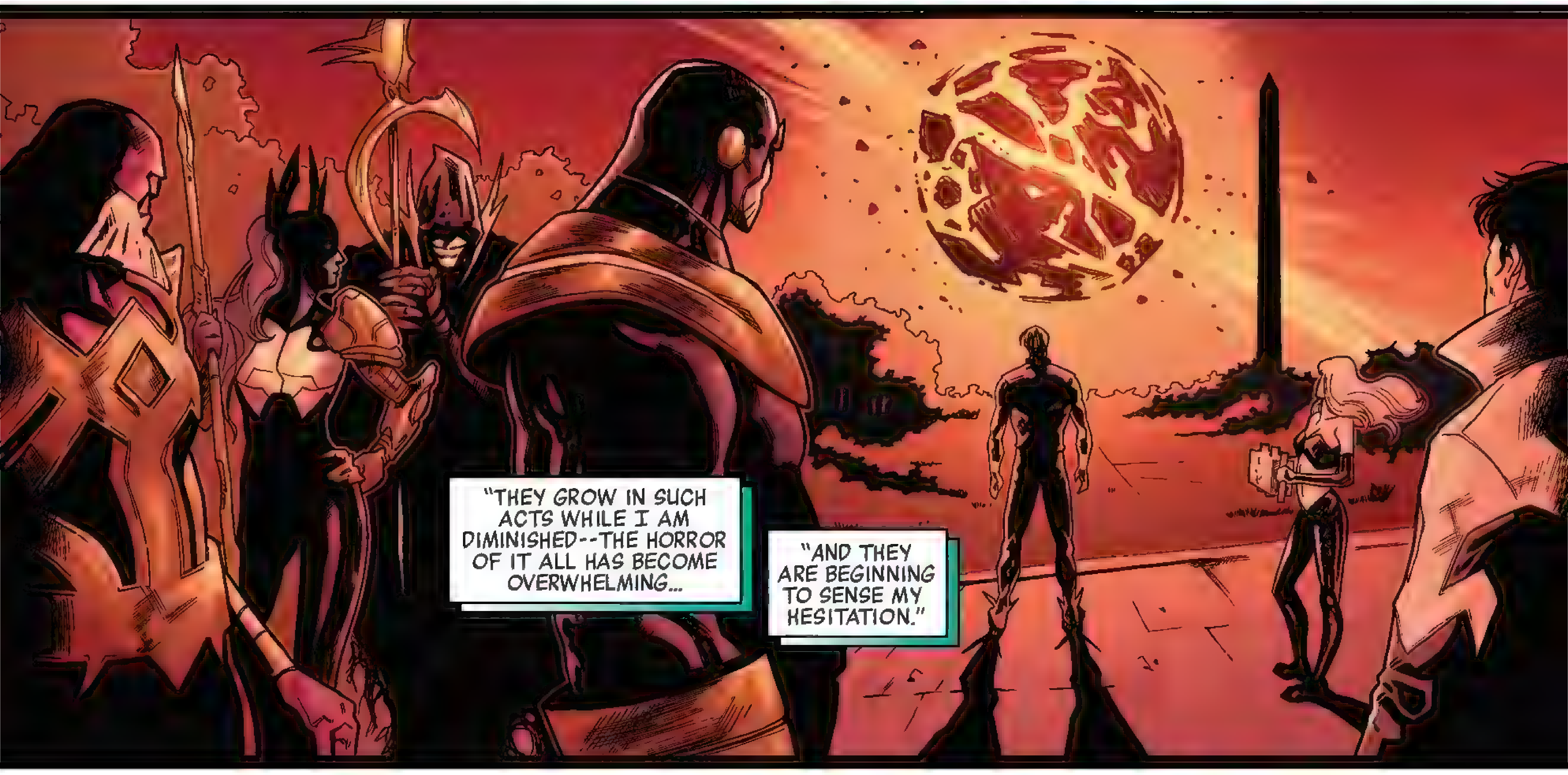
YOU THINK THAT IF EVERY MAN, WOMAN AND CHILD IN MY COUNTRY DIDN'T WANT TO TAKE THIS FOOD FROM MY TABLE, THEY COULDN'T?
TELL ME, WHICH DO YOU THINK IS CLOSER TO TRUTH: THAT THEY LOOK UP AT CASTLE DOOM AND BELIEVE ITS WALLS ARE BEYOND BEING TORN DOWN, OR THAT THEY WOULD LAY DOWN THEIR VERY LIVES TO SEE THEM STAND FOR ALL TIME?
I LOVE MY PEOPLE-- I DO--BUT THEY ARE... MY PEOPLE.
I KEEP THEM SAFE FROM HARM. I GIVE THEM A BETTER LIFE. AND AT NIGHT, BEFORE THEY SLEEP, TO WHATEVER GOD THEY PRAY, THEY GIVE THANKS FOR ME.
SO, YES, DOOM EATS FIRST...AND HE EATS THE VERY BEST.
YOU USED TO UNDERSTAND THIS.
THE CABAL IS... UNMANAGEABLE.


"THEY ARE A WILD BEAST AT HUNT.
"A NECESSARY EVIL BECAUSE EVIL ACTS WERE NEEDED... AND THE GOOD AND NOBLE HEROES OF THIS WORLD WERE SO GOOD AND NOBLE THAT THEY WOULD NOT SACRIFICE THEMSELVES ON THAT ALTAR.
"THEY LOVED THEIR DAMN PIETY TO THE POINT OF EXTINCTION.


"BUT THE CABAL...
"IN THE LAST FEW MONTHS WE HAVE DESTROYED EARTH AFTER EARTH AND SAVED *SCORES* OF UNIVERSES."


BUT VICTOR...
THEY HAVE LEARNED TO RELISH THE ATROCITY.


"THEY SAVOR THE INHUMAN TASK THAT LIES BEFORE THEM.
"WE COULD SIMPLY DESTROY A WORLD--DO WHAT WE HAVE TO DO--AND BE DONE WITH IT...
"BUT INSTEAD THEY LINGER AT THE TABLE AND, LIKE GLUTTONS, MAKE A *BANQUET* OF THE MEAL.


"THEY GROW IN SUCH ACTS WHILE I AM DIMINISHED--THE HORROR OF IT ALL HAS BECOME OVERWHELMING...
"AND THEY ARE BEGINNING TO SENSE MY HESITATION."

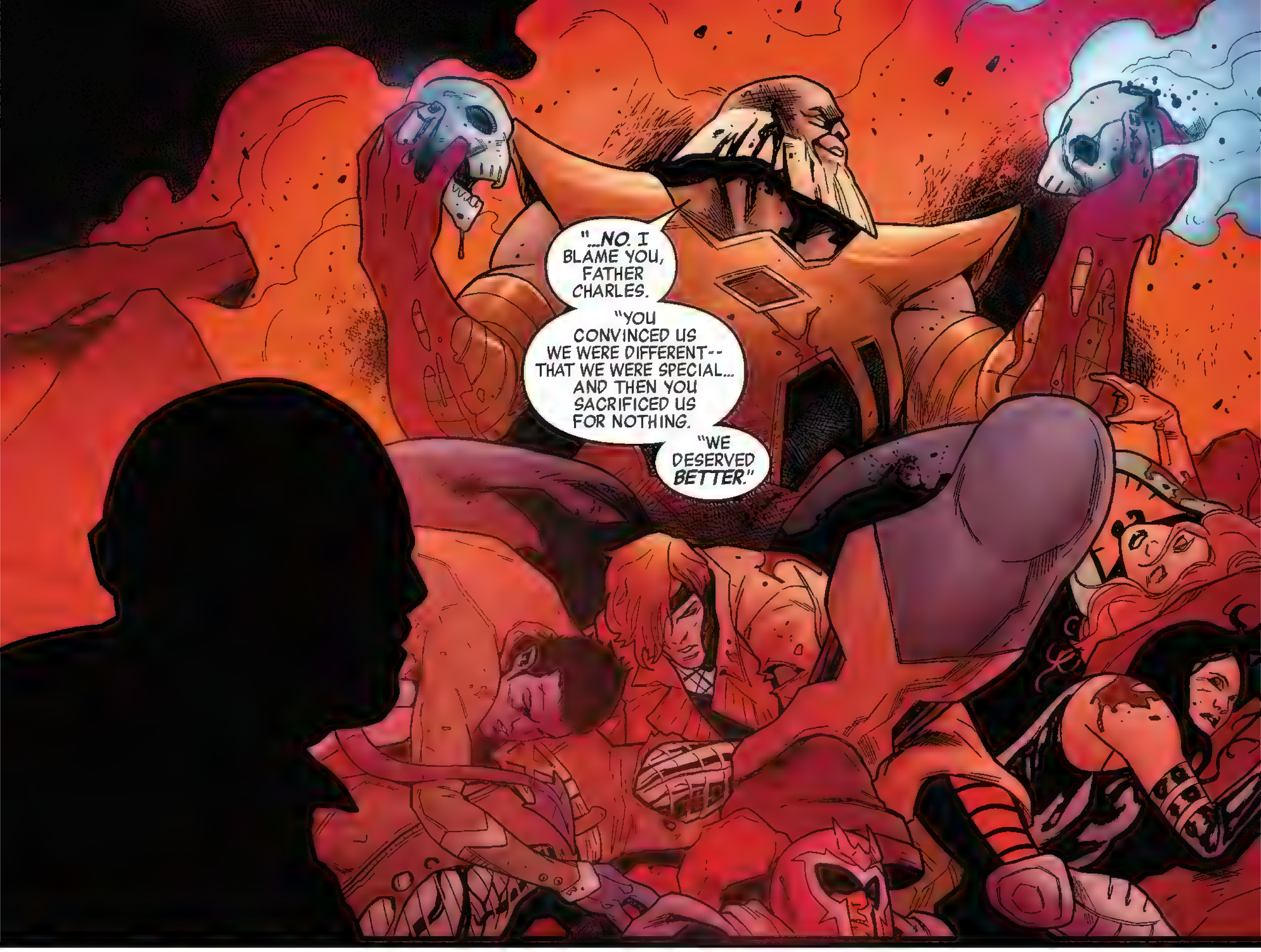
I NEED YOU.
WHICH EXPLAINS YOUR APPETITE AND YOUR *REAL* REASON FOR BEING HERE...
YOU'VE COME FOR *HELP*.
I HAVE.
TOGETHER YOU AND I COULD STAND AGAINST SUCH... COMMON BEHAVIOR. DO WHAT NEEDS DOING, AND NO MORE.
I DO NOT BEG, BUT I ALSO DO NOT LIE.
I NEED YOUR HELP, AND I WOULD BE...GRATEFUL FOR IT.

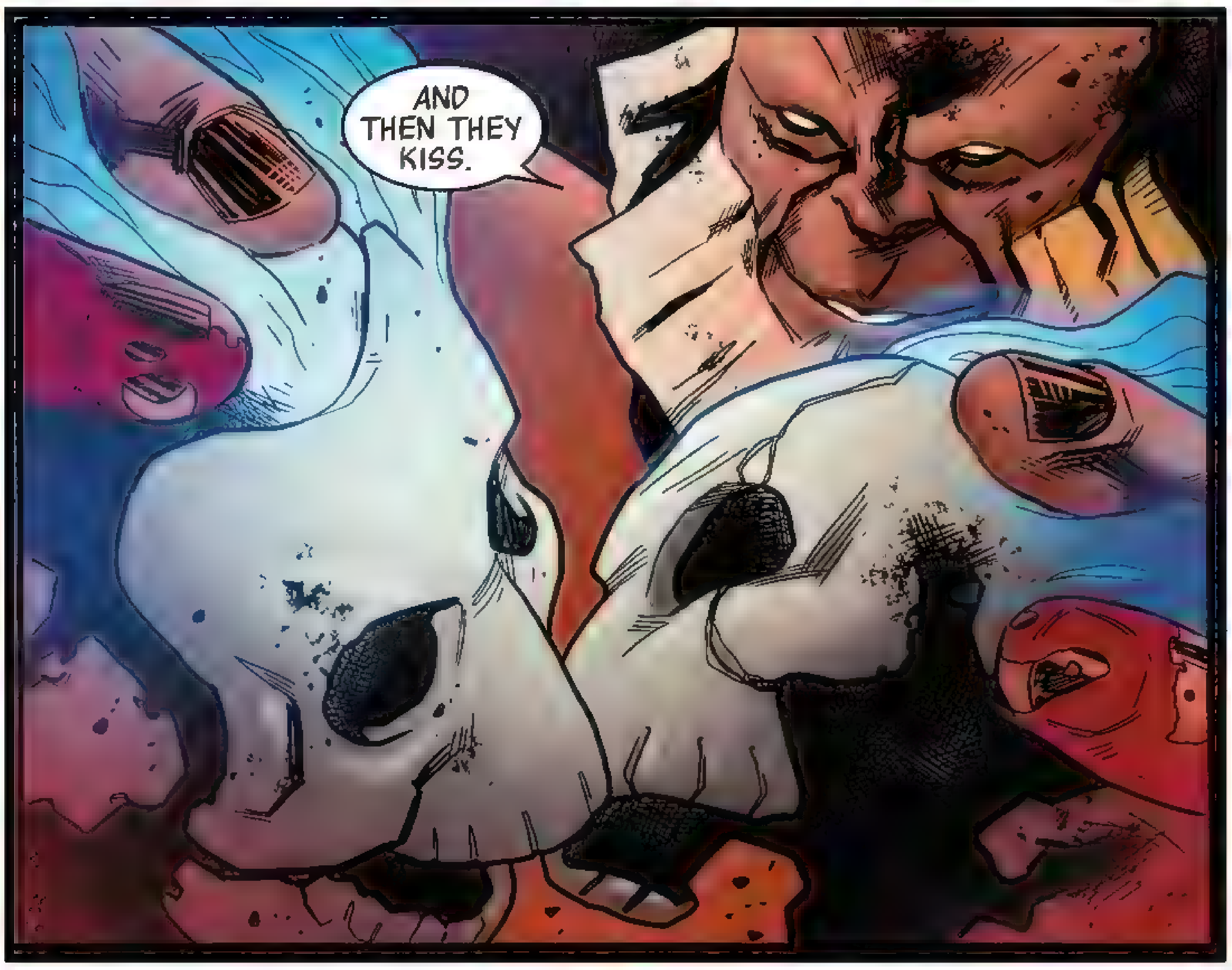
I THINK NOT.
WHAT?
YOU *COULD* HAVE COME TO ME FIRST.
YOU *SHOULD* HAVE COME TO ME FIRST...BUT YOU *DID NOT.* I CAN FORGIVE YOUR INITIAL DALLIANCES WITH RICHARDS AND THE OTHERS--THEIR NATURE IS NOT CONDUCIVE TO SUCH PRACTICALITY--BUT AFTER THAT, YOU CHOSE TO THROW IN WITH YOUR SUBHUMAN LOT. NOW YOU REGRET IT.
AND YOU DRAGGED THE STINKING CARCASS OF YOUR FAILURE TO MY DOOR.
VICTOR. PLEASE!
EVERYTHING WILL STAND OR FALL ON WHAT WE FACE.
YOU SHOULD HAVE THOUGHT OF THAT, NAMOR, AND MORE CAREFULLY CONSIDERED YOUR POSITION.
YOU SHOULD HAVE KNOWN BETTER...
DOOM IS NO MAN'S SECOND CHOICE.

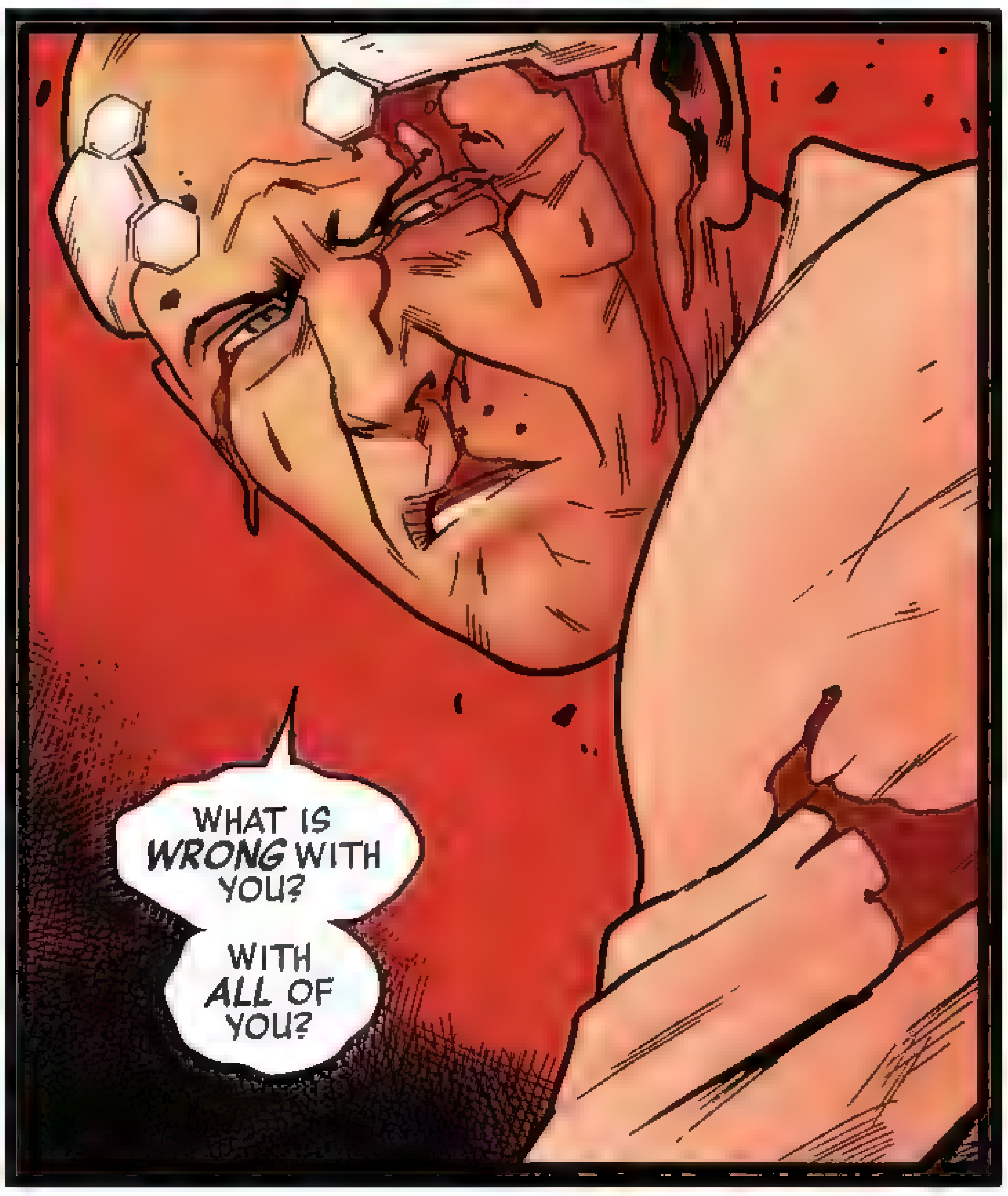
NOW, YOU MUST EXCUSE ME... I HAVE OTHER CONCERNS.
KRISTOFF. CAN YOU...
IT WAS GOOD SEEING YOU AGAIN, PRINCE NAMOR...
BEST OF LUCK WITH YOUR GENOCIDE.

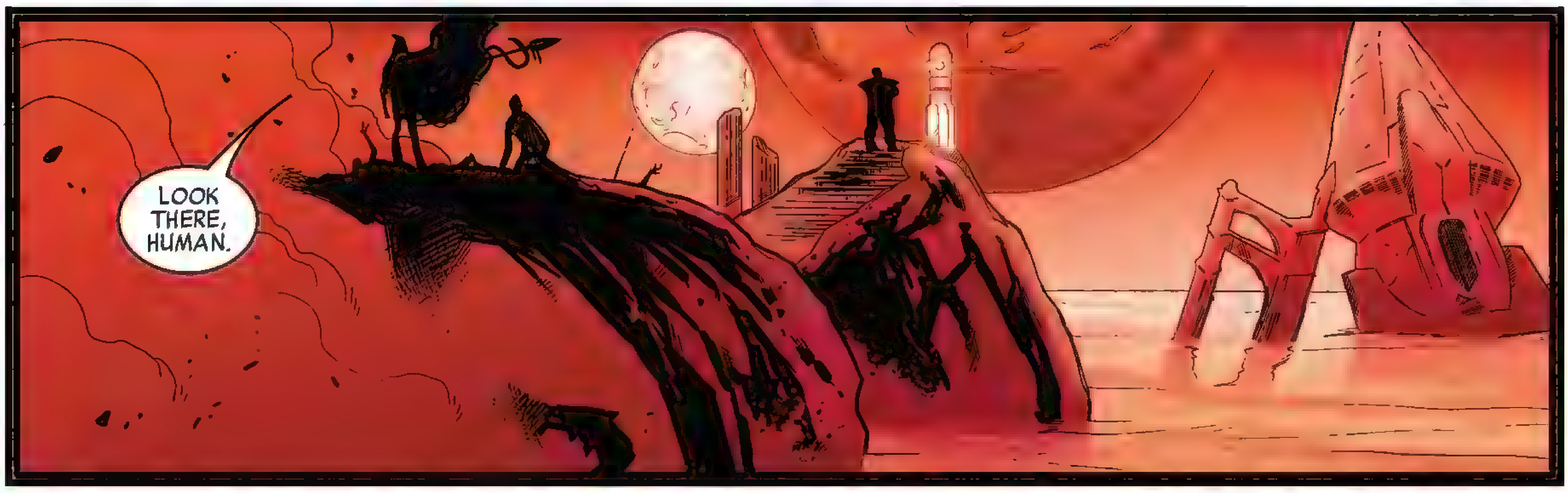
EARTH-71202.
I LOOK AROUND AND I WONDER...
WHERE IS XORN?
WHERE IS XORN, BROTHER ORDER, WHO HID THE MORNING SUN BEHIND A MASK?
WHERE IS ZORN, BROTHER CHAOS, WHO HID A BLACK HOLE BEHIND HIS?
WHERE ARE YOUR CHAMPIONS, CHARLES?
WHERE ARE YOUR CHILDREN?
I DO NOT KNOW.

I KNOW.
I KNOW...BECAUSE WHEN WE ARRIVED ON THIS BROKEN, BACKWARDS EARTH, YOU SENT THEM AND THE REST OF YOUR X-MEN TO STOP US...
TO STOP ALL THIS.
WELL... I HAVE SOMETHING FOR YOU...
A FINAL WORD FROM YOUR *CHAMPIONS*.
"WHAT IS THE TRUE VALUE OF BEING VALIANT, FATHER?
"WAS IT ENOUGH THAT I TRIED? OR WILL MY FAILURE DEFINE 'WHO I AM' IN SUCH A WAY THAT ALL MY PREVIOUS 'GOOD' IS REDUCED...
"JUST AS I HAVE BEEN.
"BROTHER! YOU MUSTN'T BE SO HARD ON YOURSELF. FAILURE IMPLIES SOME POSSIBLE CHANCE OF SUCCESS. AND HOW COULD WE EVER HAVE ACHIEVED SUCH A THING?
"ARE WE NOT RABBLE? ARE WE NOT THE CAST-OUT?
"THIS ISN'T *OUR* FAULT AT ALL...


"...NO. I BLAME YOU, FATHER CHARLES.
"YOU CONVINCED US WE WERE DIFFERENT--THAT WE WERE SPECIAL... AND THEN YOU SACRIFICED US FOR NOTHING.
"WE DESERVED BETTER."


AND THEN THEY KISS.


WHAT IS WRONG WITH YOU?
WITH ALL OF YOU?


LOOK THERE, HUMAN.

THERE IS *THANOS*...AND HE HAS COME TO DESTROY YOUR WORLD SO THAT *ALL THINGS* MIGHT BE SAVED.
HE IS DEATH, AND AS SURE AS THERE IS ANY ASSUREDNESS REMAINING IN YOUR UNIVERSE, HE WILL SUCCEED.
ALL HE WANTS IN RETURN FOR A SWIFTER, LESS CRUEL END IS ONE SMALL THING.
WHAT DO YOU WANT?
VERY LITTLE, PROFESSOR X.
A PITTANCE. A PORTION.
A TRIBUTE.
WHAT?
I WANT YOU TO *BEG*.
BEG ME TO KILL YOU, AND I WILL DO SO... QUICKLY.

I KNOW WHAT YOU'RE THINKING, MUTANT, AND I AGREE--THEY'RE ***ANIMALS***, AREN'T THEY?
WHICH LEADS TO SOMETHING OF A QUANDARY, DOESN'T IT?
HOW CAN YOU TRUST AN ANIMAL TO KEEP ITS WORD? YOU CAN'T.
WHICH LEADS US TO THE MORE ***INTERESTING*** QUESTION, WHICH IS: WHY WOULD YOU SUCCUMB TO THE TYRANT'S REQUEST AT ALL?
YOU KNOW BY NOW THAT WE MUST KILL YOUR WORLD IF OURS IS TO LIVE. YOUR DEATH IS INEVITABLE...SO HOW COULD WE THREATEN YOU WITH THE PROMISE OF WHAT IS ALREADY ASSURED?
THAT ASSURANCE--THAT TRUTH--IS UNDENIABLE. A STRONG MAN WOULD HIDE BEHIND THE WALLS OF THAT TRUTH--HE WOULD MAKE A FORTRESS OF IT AGAINST WHICH NO SIEGE WOULD SUCCEED.
HE WOULD FIND...***SOME VICTORY*** IN THAT DEATH.
WHY THEN, FACED WITH THE FACTS AT HAND, AM I SO SURE THAT YOU ***WILL*** BEG?

AND THE WALLS CAME CRUMBLING DOWN.
PLEASE.
PLEASE... WHAT?
PLEASE KILL ME!

THE FALLEN CITY OF WAKANDA.
POPULATION: 1,309.
ALL CLEAR. NO LOCAL HEAT SIGNATURES, STRIKE LEADER. THERE'S NOTHING LIVING HERE.
OUR CURRENT CONCERN IS NOT MEN, SOLDIER, BUT *THE UNHOLY MACHINES OF MAXIMUS*-- AN INCURSION UNDERWAY MEANS THE CABAL HAVE LEFT WAKANDA.
REST ASSURED, WE WILL HAVE ONLY *ONE* CHANCE AT THIS.
YES, BUT SOMETIMES I WONDER WHY? TO SAVE A WORLD THAT STOOD BY AND DID NOTHING TO SAVE OUR NATION?
WAKANDA CRUMBLED. BUT THEY JUST WATCHED ON THEIR TELEVISIONS, SOME EVEN MANAGED TEARS FOR OUR PLIGHT, BUT NO ONE *DID ANYTHING.*
WHY SHOULD WE SACRIF--
BA-BOOOOOM!

UP...
GET... UP...
YOU HEARD HIM! UP! UP, YOU DOGS OF WAR!
FOR WAKANDA!
FOR WAKANDA!
IT'S STARTED.
THE HATUT ZERAZE HAVE DRAWN THEIR FIRE. THE DRONES SWARM TO PREVENT INFECTION.
QUICKLY THEN.
THIS PASSAGE LEADS DIRECTLY TO THE ARMORY.
HOW LONG DO WE HAVE, BROTHER?
THE INCURSION IS CURRENTLY ACTIVE, SO WE SHOULD HAVE TIME TO STEAL OR SCUTTLE THE REMAINING ANTI-MATTER BOMBS BEFORE ANY OF THE CABAL RETURN.
I WILL NOT LIE, T'CHALLA, IT CHAFES ME THAT THIS IS WHAT WE STOOP TO: BLACKMAIL.

YOU'LL FEEL BETTER IF YOU REFER TO IT AS *LEVERAGE*, SHURI.
I'D FEEL ***BETTER*** IF MY ENEMIES WERE DEAD.
OF COURSE, BUT EITHER WAY, ONCE THE WORLD DECIDED THAT WAKANDA WAS AN ACCEPTABLE PRICE TO PAY FOR THE SURVIVAL OF THE PLANET, THERE WAS NO LONGER ANY SHAME TO BE CONSIDERED IN "HOW THINGS APPEAR."
WE'RE HERE.
LISTEN, SISTER...
WHEN THE NEXT INCURSION COMES, AND THE ONLY PEOPLE IN THE WORLD WITH THE MEANS OF ENSURING ITS SURVIVAL ARE THE DIASPORA OF THE GOLDEN CITY...
THEN WE WILL MAKE THEM CONSIDER ***TRUE SHAME.***
I PROMISE YOU, I WILL MAKE THEM CHOKE ON IT.
NO MOTION. NO ENERGY SIGNATURES. THE ROOM'S CLEAR.
QUICKLY. WE NEED TO--
NO!
WAIT!

ZZZZAKKKKK!
WHAT IN THE NAME OF--
"NOOOOOOO. NOOOOOOO.
"NO. DON'T TAKE **ME**. I WANT TO STAY AND BLOW THINGS UP.
"LIKE BILLIONS OF PEOPLE AND THE BIG, WEEPY HEARTS OF HEROES.
"BUT THEN YOU HAVE TO ASK YOURSELF, CAN YOU REALLY CALL YOURSELF A **HERO** IF YOU'VE SPENT TIME BUILDING **BOMBS** LIKE ME?"
NO, MISTER BOMB.
NO YOU CANNOT.
MAXIMUS.
YOU KNOW, I WOKE UP THIS MORNING AND JUST KNEW I WAS GOING TO CATCH ME A VERY BIG FISH.
I SAW YOU SEE ME THINK I SAW YOU SEEING ME... OR SOMETHING LIKE THAT. MOVES WITHIN MOVES. CHECK. CHECKMATE.
YOU CAN'T POSSIBLY THINK I'M NOT GETTING THROUGH THAT FIELD, MAXIMUS. YOU'RE SMARTER THAN THAT.

I KNOW.
YOU'RE NOT LOCKED OUT, T'CHALLA...YOU'RE LOCKED *IN.* AND HERE'S THE WARDEN COME TO PUT YOU IN YOUR PLACE.
THE FIRST RULE OF ***THE BLACK ORDER OF THANOS*** IS DO NOT SPEAK OF THINGS AS TRUE THAT YOU HAVE NOT SEEN AND UNDERSTOOD WITH YOUR OWN EYES.
YOU CAN'T BELIEVE THOSE INCURSION REPORTS YOU GET FED, HUMAN.
THEY GAVE US YOUR CITY, YOU THINK THE PEOPLE WHO RULE THIS WORLD WOULDN'T LIE EVERY SINGLE TIME ABOUT WHO IS, AND WHO IS NOT, OFF-WORLD DURING AN EVENT?
OF COURSE NOT...
YOU KNOW HOW LITTLE THESE PEOPLE CAN BE TRUSTED. YOU KNOW HOW LITTLE THEY MATTER.
ZRRRNNN!
AAIIEEEEEEE!
SHURI! T'CHALLA!
GO! FIND ANOTHER WAY!

LOOK HERE, WOMAN.
I AM HATUT ZERAZE--A *DOG* OF *WAR*. I WAS MADE TO DIE FOR MY COUNTRY...HAVE YOU EVER HAD SO MUCH CONVICTION?
PING! PING!
BA-BOOOOOM!
EVERY SINGLE DAY I WAKE.
WHERE DID THEY GO, MAXIMUS?
THEY GOT AWAY. HE BLEW HIMSELF UP AND THEY GOT AWAY. NOT CHECKMATE. CHECK.
I NEVER PLAN FOR SACRIFICE, WHY IS THAT?
MAXIMUS! *WHERE?*
OUT. AWAY. WHERE ELSE DO YOU THINK?
I WILL REMOVE YOUR TONGUE.
"FINE. TASKING DRONES...
"COVER YOUR EARS."

KA-BOOOOOOM!
WHAT ARE THEY DOING?
MY BEST GUESS IS MAXIMUS IS COLLAPSING THE TUNNEL TO FOLLOW WHERE WE WENT. CRUDE, AND TIME-CONSUMING.
WHAT ARE WE DOING?
WE ARE LEAVING. NOW.
REED! ARE YOU THERE? WE'RE COMING IN HOT.
HOT? YOU MEAN...
YES.
TRANSLOCATING.
YOU KNOW THEY CAN TRACK THAT NOW. IT TAKES THEM A FEW HOURS, BUT THEY HAVE THE CAPABILITY.
I KNOW, BUT WE HAVE TO RISK IT.
SO... FAILURE.
MORE. BETRAYAL.
I'LL TELL THE OTHERS TO PACK. BE SAFE, MY FRIEND.
SHURI, WE HAVE TO GO.
I'M NOT COMING, T'CHALLA...

WE FIGHT FOR SOMETHING. OVER THE IDEA OF WHAT WE COULD HAVE HAD...OF WHAT ONCE EXISTED...
BUT IS NOW NOTHING.
I SEE NOW, THE GODDESS... SHE KNEW WHAT WAS COMING.
ALL THAT REMAINS OF WAKANDA IS ASH AND RUBBLE. SEE, BROTHER... IT'S ALL NECROPOLIS NOW.
A CITY OF GHOSTS.
A KINGDOM OF NOTHING BUT THE DEAD.
I CAN TRUST YOU TO FINISH THIS?
I COULD DO BETTER-- I COULD STAY.
NO. YOU CAN'T.
THEN YOU HAVE MY WORD, SISTER.
I SWEAR IT.

I WILL MISS YOU, T'CHALLA.
I WILL SEE YOU SOON, SHURI.
HE RAN OFF AND LEFT YOU HERE ALL ALONE? WHAT HEART. WHAT COURAGE.
"THE FIRST RULE OF THE BLACK ORDER OF THANOS IS DO NOT SPEAK OF THINGS AS TRUE THAT YOU HAVE NOT SEEN AND UNDERSTOOD WITH YOUR OWN EYES."
YOU DON'T HAVE A DAMN CLUE WHAT YOU JUST SAW.
I KNOW WHAT I SEE *NOW*.

AND WHAT IS THAT?
NOTHING THAT BREATHES TOMORROW.
I OFFER YOU A PAINFUL DEATH OR A SHAMEFUL ONE, MY POOR, FALLEN QUEEN. WHICH WILL IT BE?

LATVERIA.
FORGIVE ME, FATHER...
...BUT REGARDING PRINCE NAMOR...IS HE NOT AN ALLY... HAS HE NOT ALWAYS BEEN?
AN OPPORTUNITY MISSED, I THINK.
NO, KRISTOFF. YOU MUST RECOGNIZE THE BROKEN FOR WHAT THEY ARE. ALL YOU HAVE--REGARDLESS OF BY WHICH ETHOS ONE IS GOVERNED--IS LOYALTY TO WHO WE ARE.
AND THAT MAN WHO SAT AT OUR TABLE? FALLEN. UNRECOGNIZABLE TO ME.
DROSS, TO BE QUICKLY CAST OUT.
IF THAT WERE NOT ENOUGH, THERE IS ALWAYS THE QUESTION OF WHO WOULD THE RELATIONSHIP PROFIT? IN THAT REGARD, HIS OWN WORDS DAMNED HIM...
AS WE CLEARLY UNDERSTAND MORE OF WHAT THREATENS THIS WORLD THAN HE DOES.
BE-DOOP!
IDENTIFY CONFIRMED. PLEASE STATE AUTHORIZATION PASSWORD.
EVERYTHING DIES.
ACCESS GRANTED.

AH, DOCTOR! WE WEREN'T EXPECTING YOU HERE THIS EVENING. IS THERE SOMETHING WRONG?
NOTHING PRESSING, THINKER...NOTHING YOU SHOULD BE CONCERNED WITH.
MUCH LIKE WHERE I AM GOING TO BE. OR WHY...
YOUR ONLY CONCERN IS THE GRINDING INEVITABILITY OF *PROGRESS*...
AND WHETHER THAT PROGRESS PLEASES ME.
THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS GOOD FORTUNE, VICTOR...OR FATE SMILING FAVORABLY UPON THE LUCKY FEW...
THERE IS ONLY THE WORK... AND I DO IT WELL.
COME AND SEE YOUR PROGRESS, DOOM...

SEE WHAT WE HAVE DONE.
SINCE I ARRIVED, THE NATURE OF ***THE OBJECT*** HAS PREVENTED US FROM FULLY UNDERSTANDING ITS PARAMETERS.
EARLY ON, IT WAS CLEAR THE PIECE OF DEAD EARTH COLLECTED FROM THE LATVERIAN INCURSION WAS... I SUPPOSE THE BEST TERM WOULD BE ***BROADCASTING***... AT VARIOUS HARMONICS.
FOR SOME TIME NOW, WE BELIEVED THIS TO BE A LATENT TRANS-UNIVERSAL SIGNAL.
"THAT WHOEVER ENGINEERED THIS IS CREATING A SERIES OF TOUCHPOINTS--LIKE CELESTIAL BUOYS--MARKING WORLDS AMIDST THE MULTIVERSE."
AND HAVE YOU FINALLY CONFIRMED THESE SUSPICIONS?
OH...I'VE DONE BETTER THAN THAT...
CLICK

LOOK.
THIS... THIS IS FANTASTIC, THINKER.
YOU'VE MAPPED THEIR ENTIRE NETWORK.
YES. I CRACKED THE SEQUENCING OF THE ALGORITHM BEING USED TO VARY THEIR HARMONIC SIGNAL.
IT'S MUCH MORE THAN THAT.
OH?
YES.
LOOK CLOSER, KRISTOFF. HE'S REVERSE-ENGINEERED A WAY TO FIND WHO IS BEHIND THIS.
THIS IS PROGRESS, THINKER. WELL DONE.
IT'S TRUE. AND GLORIOUS. I DID. I DID FIND IT.
SO WHAT NOW, FATHER?
NOW?
NOW THOSE WHO BELIEVE THEY CAN MANUFACTURE DOOM WILL FACE DOOM *HIMSELF*.
YOU HAVE A PLAN, DON'T YOU, FATHER?
OF COURSE.
BUT I HAVE *MORE* THAN A PLAN...

I HAVE ALL THE PIECES NECESSARY TO BRING IT TO PASS...
...THANKS TO THE *MOLECULE MAN!*
LET THERE BE SUFFERING AND WOE TO ALL WHO STAND IN MY WAY.

“UNIVERSAL AVENGERS”

IOWA.
THE KANE FARM.
"YOU SEE ALL KINDS OF THINGS IN THIS WORLD-- EVENTUALLY, YOU THINK YOU'VE SEEN IT ALL.
"BUT THEN SOMETHING NEW COMES YOUR WAY, AND SUDDENLY, THERE'S THAT THING YOU THOUGHT WAS LOST FOREVER: WONDER."
NOW LOOK AT YOU, LITTLE MAN...AREN'T YOU A WONDER?
YOU DID GOOD, IZZY.
GOOD GENES, DAD.
SPEAKING OF: GRANDPA... WHERE'S--
THE GROVE. THE SMALLER ONE IN THE FAR FIELD. YOU REMEMBER WHICH ONE I'M TALKING ABOUT?
YEAH.
MANIFOLD, HAVE WE GOT TIME?
UH-HUH. DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT, SAM. I'LL GET US BACK WHERE WE NEED TO BE.
YOU GUYS GO DO YOUR THING.
OKAY, KIDDO, TIME TO INTRODUCE YOU TO SOMEONE VERY SPECIAL.

SO...YOU GOING TO TELL YOUR FATHER?
NOT SURE WHAT YOU MEAN THERE, SAMUEL.
"HEY, DAD, WE MIGHT NEED YOU TO WATCH THE KID, BUT I DON'T WANT YOU TO WORRY TOO MUCH ABOUT IT...
"HE'S A MUTANT-SUPERHUMAN-SUPERGUARDIAN HYPER-GESTATED BABY THAT--AS LONG AS YOU DON'T THROW HIM INTO THE *SUN*--SHOULD BE JUST FINE, NO MATTER WHAT."
YEAH, OUR LITTLE BOY IS SOMETHING ELSE.
I WISH EVERYBODY HAD GOTTEN A CHANCE TO MEET HIM.
HEY, GRANDPA...

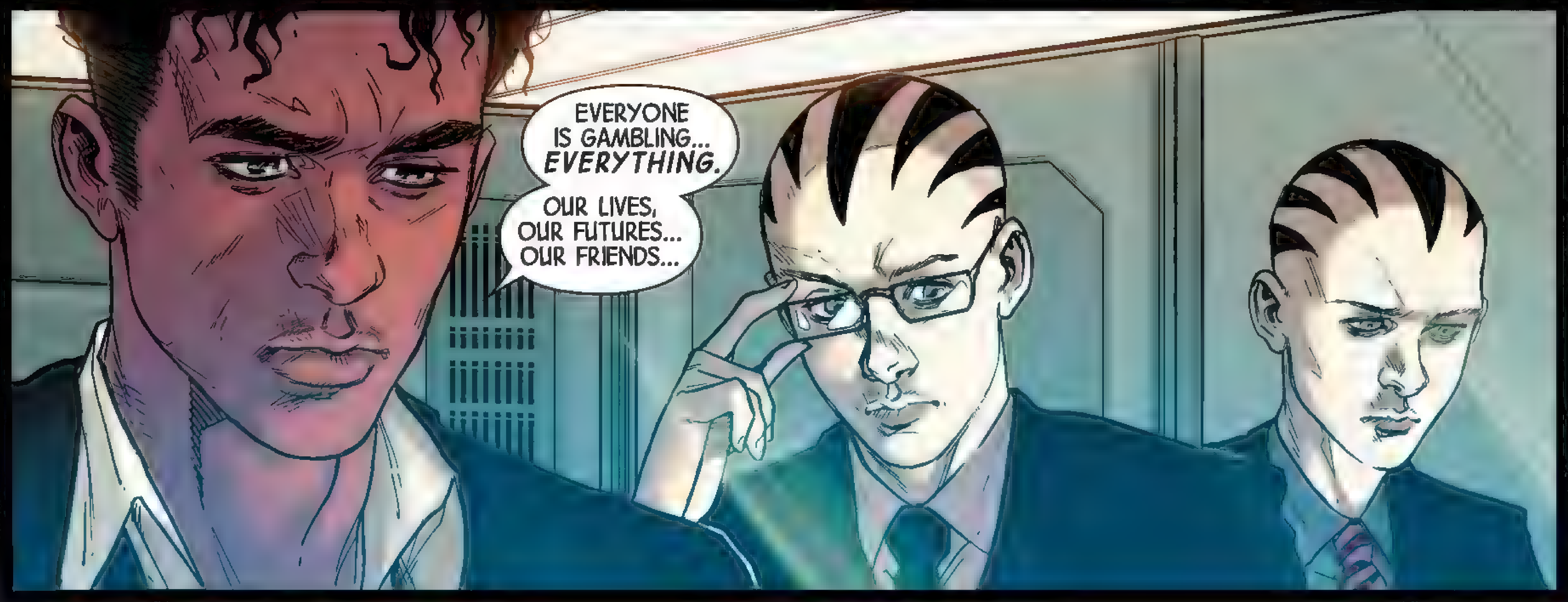
I MISS YOU SO MUCH.
DAN KANE
CAPTAIN TERROR
"GIVE 'EM HELL"
THIS IS *JOSIAH*.
HE'S ONE OF US.

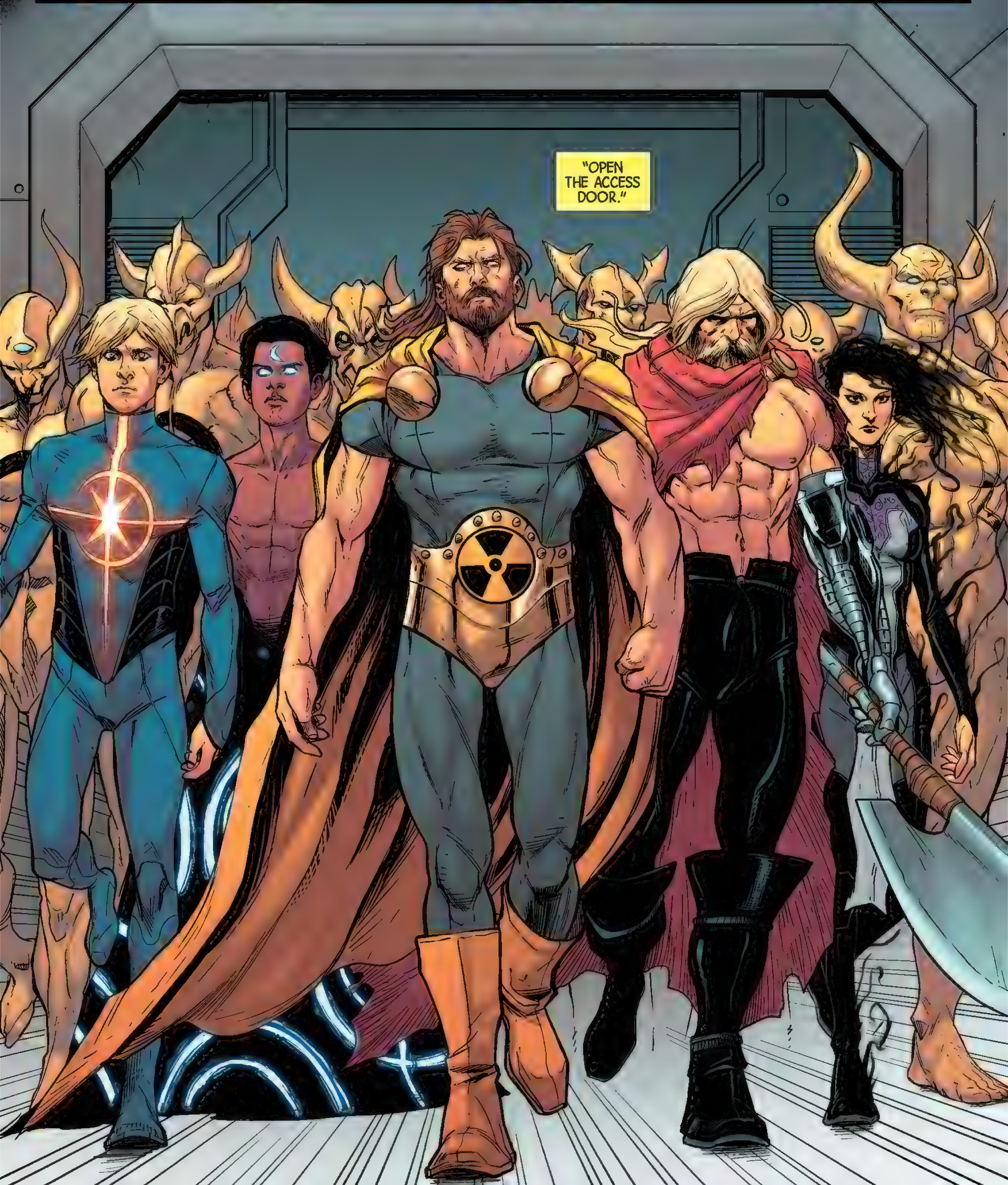
THE DRAKE PASSAGE.
APPROACHING THE SAVAGE LAND NOW, MR. DA COSTA.
WE'LL BE LANDING IN THE NEXT FIVE MINUTES-- IS THERE ANYTHING YOU NEED BEFORE WE TOUCH DOWN?
NO. THANK YOU.
JUST GET US ON THE GROUND.
ENGLISH OR PORTUGUESE, PLEASE.
AH, YES...SORRY, SIR.
WELL, WHAT WE WERE TALKING ABOUT WAS: DO YOU EVER WONDER HOW WELL THE YELLOW MEN CAN SEE OUT OF THOSE HELMETS?
BECAUSE I DON'T THINK THEY CAN.
I TRY NOT TO THINK ABOUT IT.

PLUS, WE HAVE *BIGGER* CONCERNS.
THE SAVAGE LAND.

WELCOME HOME, SIR.
HOME IS *BRAZIL*, DOCTOR. IN MY PALATIAL ESTATE, OVERLOOKING A BEAUTIFUL BEACH, OWNING MY OWN TELEVISION NETWORK...
THIS...IS *BUSINESS*, AND I'M NOT HAPPY WITH THE MOST RECENT REPORT YOU SENT ME REGARDING THE INITIAL POWER GRID-- THOSE FIGURES CANNOT BE RIGHT.
THEY WERE. BUT WE'VE ALSO HAD A BREAKTHROUGH...
WHICH IS WHAT YOUR ADVISORS ARE LOOKING AT NOW.
OH! THIS IS VERY CLEVER.
THEY SWITCHED POWER SOURCES.
YES. AN ANTI-MATTER INJECTION CORE GIVES YOU A HIGHER UPPER THRESHOLD OF USABLE ENERGY, BUT IT'S A BURST--AND THE BOTTLENECK PROBLEM HAS ALWAYS PRESENTED CONVERSION ISSUES.
BUT USING THE GEOTHERMAL VENT BENEATH THE SAVAGE LAND SOLVES THAT PROBLEM AS YOU CAN SLOWLY INCREASE THE POWER LEVELS. SURE, THE TOP END IS--
SHUT UP, ZEBRAS.
SO...IT WORKS.
IT DOES.
HOW WOULD YOU LIKE TO PROCEED NOW?
THE WORLD IS ENDING, DOCTOR... WHAT DO YOU *THINK* I WANT TO DO?
FIRE IT UP.

LATER.
IT'S HOLDING!
WE CAN MAINTAIN THIS CURRENT LEVEL INDEFINITELY. WE'RE STABLE AND READY TO PUSH POWER TO THE AUGER.
ACTIVATING THE MACHINE.
WHAT DO YOU GUYS THINK?
ALL CURRENT MODELS PROJECT THAT THE COLLAPSING MULTIVERSE CONTAINS SEVERAL HUNDRED THOUSAND REMAINING UNIVERSES.
AT THESE REDUCED LEVELS-- AND FROM OUR POSITION ON A FAR END OF THE UNIVERSAL SPECTRUM-- WE'LL BE ABLE TO INJECT/PROJECT THE TEAM HALFWAY ACROSS THE MULTIVERSE.
THAT FAR? DOES THAT MEAN...
YES.
IT DOES.
WELL...THAT'S HOW IT HAS TO BE, ISN'T IT?
RESPECTFULLY... *WE* HAVE MORE TO LOSE THAN YOU DO, SIR...SO I DON'T KNOW THAT IT *IS*.
THAT'S WHERE YOU'RE WRONG, MY STRIPED FRIEND.
WE'RE ALL EQUAL-OPPORTUNITY RISK TAKERS NOW.


EVERYONE IS GAMBLING... *EVERYTHING.*
OUR LIVES, OUR FUTURES... OUR FRIENDS...


"OPEN THE ACCESS DOOR."

FOUR HOURS AGO.
AND YOU'RE *SURE* ABOUT THIS?
WASN'T ANY MISTAKING IT, BOBBY.
IT WAS AN *ALEPH FROM ANOTHER UNIVERSE*--PARTIALLY DAMAGED FROM ITS MIGRATION HERE, BUT DEFINITELY BUILDER-ENGINEERED AND PRODUCED.
BUT THAT'S NOT THE PART OF THIS THAT CONCERNS YOU, THOUGH. TELL HIM, ADAM.
THERE'S A *COMPRESSION* PROBLEM.
MANY THINGS EXIST IN THE SPACE BETWEEN UNIVERSES. NOT IN RELATION TO THE FERTILE GROUND OF "REAL SPACE"... LIKE THIS UNIVERSE...
BUT IN COMPARISON TO HOW FEW SHOULD BE ABLE TO EXIST IN NO-SPACE. LIKE THE ALEPH WE FOUND.
AS WE APPROACH THE END OF EVERYTHING, OVERFLOW AND OVERLAP ARE GOING TO LEAD TO A LESS...ORDERLY STATE OF DECAY.
THIS IS A PROBLEM.
I'M SORRY, GUYS...I DON'T HAVE ANY IDEA WHAT THAT MEANS.
WE DON'T THINK THE ALEPH *JUMPED* HERE. WE THINK IT WAS *PUSHED THROUGH* BY THE COLLAPSE OF EVERYTHING.
LIKE ADAM SAID...THERE'S A COMPRESSION PROBLEM.
AND, NOT FOR NOTHING...BUT THAT THING BEHIND YOU IS *FREAKING ME OUT.*

YOU MEAN *POD?*
YOU DON'T NEED TO WORRY ABOUT POD, STARBRAND. EVERYTHING IS COOL. POD'S WITH THE PLANET, WHICH MEANS POD'S WITH *US.*
TELL THEM, POD.
EVERYTHING IS COOL.
OKAAYYY...
ANYWAY, THE POINT: YOU PUT OUT THE CALL FOR US TO COME BACK AND HELP YOU WITH *YOUR* PROBLEM... ONLY FOR US TO DISCOVER *OUR* PROBLEM IS THE SAME AS *YOUR* PROBLEM.
AND?
WE WANT IN.

"WELL, WHAT DID YOU FIND OUT?
"COULD YOU CONFIRM WHAT WE'VE FOUND?
"PLEASE...TELL US, ARE WE *RIGHT?*"

THREE HOURS AGO.
JUST A MOMENT MORE, DOCTOR.
IF THIS WAS JUST SOME...STANDARD-LIVING, CARBON WORLD, A SURFACE SCAN WOULD PROVIDE MORE THAN A SUFFICIENT AMOUNT OF DATA.
THIS WORLD, HOWEVER, HAS BEEN TOUCHED BY EX NIHILO, SO IT SHOULD BOTH LIVE...AND *LIVE*.
"BUT, AS WE BOTH KNOW, NEW GENESIS WAS ABATED, AND THE SENTIENT *NEW WORLD* WAS KILLED BY ANOTHER BUILDER SYSTEM: *STARBRAND*.
"THIS MEANS A CURSORY GLANCE IS NOT ENOUGH, AS THE NEW WORLD'S DEATH OBSCURES THE STATE OF THE OLD.
"WE NEED TO DIG DEEPER."
AH, THE EX-NIHILII HAVE REACHED THE CORE.
WE CAN *SEE* THE WHOLE SYSTEM.

THIS WORLD HAS SCARS.
THESE LIGHTS-- THE POINTS YOU SEE HERE--HAVE BRUSHED UP AGAINST FOREIGN UNIVERSAL BODIES.
WHAT DO YOU MEAN, ABYSS?
FOREIGN? UNIVERSAL?
LIKE HYPERION. BUT NOT JUST A PERSON.
AN ENTIRE ECOSYSTEM.
YOU MEAN A WORLD.
WHICH CONFIRMS WHAT WE'VE LEARNED ON OUR OWN.
WHICH MEANS THE S.H.I.E.L.D. FILES WE'VE SEEN ARE TRUE. WHICH AGREES WITH WHAT CAPTAIN ROGERS TOLD THE AVENGERS MONTHS AGO.
YES. BUT THIS IMPLIES IT'S BOTH AN ONGOING AND *LINGERING* PROBLEM. EITHER WAY...YOU NOW HAVE YOUR INDEPENDENT CONFIRMATION.
CAN WE PROCEED WITH THE PROJECT?
WHAT DO YOU THINK?
THE NEW WORLD IS DEAD-- THE OLD WORLD IS SURELY DYING.
YOU SHOULD EXPAND YOUR PLANS TO INCLUDE US.

DO YOU UNDERSTAND THE RISKS?
HERE'S THE THING ABOUT *LIFE*, ROBERTO DA COSTA...
MOST PEOPLE DON'T REALLY UNDERSTAND IT...
THEY PERCEIVE IT IN TERMS OF THEIR OWN EXISTENCE-- THEIR OWN BIRTH, THE BIRTH OF THEIR CHILDREN...
THEY MEASURE LIFE BY THE TIME THEY HAVE IN THEIRS. THIS IS LIFE AS AN EXTENSION OF LOVE, THERE'S NOTHING WRONG WITH IT...
BUT IT IS NOT LIFE UNFETTERED. IT'S NOT LIFE AS A PRIMAL FORCE. IT'S NOT THE VIOLENT STRUGGLE OF LIFE--IT'S A BUBBLE MAKING ITS WAY TO THE SURFACE OF A SEA.
I SEE LIFE AS A PERFECT SPHERE, CALLED A PLANET, RESTING THE PERFECT DISTANCE FROM A PERFECT SUN.
THE VAST MAJORITY OF THE UNIVERSE IS NOTHINGNESS. I KNOW THIS...IT IS THE ABSENCE OF LIFE.
THIS IS HOW I SEE IT.
UNDERSTAND? LIFE IS A MIRACLE IN THE FACE OF THE LIFELESS VOID.
WHAT YOU FACE NOW IS THE END OF ALL MIRACLES. A RETURN TO AN EQUILIBRIUM CALLED NOTHING.

"BUT I AM EX NIHILO-- I AM LIFE.
"AND I WILL NOT STAND FOR SUCH A THING.
"I *HAVE* TO GO."
"YOU DON'T HAVE TO GO, FATHER."

TWO HOURS AGO.
IF I STAYED, WHAT WOULD THAT MEAN?
HOW ABOUT THIS THEN:
WE DON'T *WANT* YOU TO GO.
WHAT KIND OF EXAMPLE WOULD THAT BE?
NOT JUST FOR THE OTHERS, BUT FOR YOU? HAVEN'T I TAUGHT YOU? *SERVICE* MATTERS. *SACRIFICE* MATTERS.
THEN I WOULD SAY: I DON'T WANT TO EITHER.
BUT YOU HAVE TO.
YES. I HAVE TO...
I AM NEEDED.

IT FEELS WRONG.
Hmmm?
SENDING YOU OUT THERE, THOR. IT FEELS WRONG.
HOW MIGHT THAT BE?
WELL...*I'M* STAYING HERE TO FIX THE AVENGERS WHILE *YOU'RE*...
UNDERGOING A DIFFERENT TRIAL.
I'M JUST SAYING...
THE AUGER IS GOING TO THROW ALL OF YOU TO THE OTHER SIDE OF THE MULTIVERSE.
TENS OF THOUSANDS OF UNIVERSES AWAY.

SOUNDS VERY FAR.
YOU CERTAINLY DON'T MEASURE THE DISTANCE IN *MILES.*
REGARDLESS... I STAY HERE AND TRY AND FIX THE AVENGERS--A GROUP OF WHICH YOU WERE A FOUNDING MEMBER...
WHILE I GO TO SMITE AT THE VERY HEART OF WHAT CAUSED...ALL THIS.
I WISH YOU WELL IN REPAIRING THE DREAM, ROBERTO... I HOPE THAT WHEN THE MOMENT COMES, MY WILL IS AS STEADY AS YOURS. MY HEART AS RIGHTEOUS.
SOON... WE SHALL SEE.
THOR.
YES?

YOU UNDERSTAND, RIGHT?
THERE'S NO COMING BACK.
"YOU'RE ALL GOING TO DIE OUT THERE."
AYE. IT IS AN END.
BUT TO DIE... STRIKING DOWN THE GREAT DESTROYER?
THAT WOULD BE A FITTING ONE.

"SO IF YOU PRAY, PRAY THAT I AM NOT FOUND WANTING...
"AND INSTEAD AM WORTHY OF SUCH A GLORIOUS END."

“WHAT HAPPENED WHEN THE WORLD WOKE UP”

DAY ONE.
I THINK WE'VE LOST OUR WAY.
ALL WE NEED IS A LITTLE LIGHT.
ANY LUCK ON THAT FRONT, HENRY? TIME'S A FACTOR.
I THINK SO...
AND YOU CAN'T RUSH GREATNESS, REED. WITHOUT PATIE--
BZZZ!
AH! THERE. THAT SHOULD DO IT.
TRY IT NOW.
HERE GOES.
CLANG!
HRMPT!
HOW'D YOU FIND OUT ABOUT THIS PLACE?

MY FATHER TOLD ME.
HE USED TO WORK HERE FOR A WHILE WITH HOWARD STARK.
SOME SECRET-SOCIETY, CLANDESTINE JOB WITH THE UNSEEN ARCHITECTS OF HISTORY. APPARENTLY, TO HEAR HIM TELL IT, ONE OF THEIR JOB DESCRIPTIONS WAS "ASSISTING THE ORDERLY DEMISE OF THE WORLD."
NOW THAT I THINK ABOUT IT, THIS MIGHT NOT HAVE BEEN SUCH A GOOD IDEA...
OR MAYBE IT'S PERFECT.
"OH, WE BROTHERS OF ABYSS. LOST SOULS WHO LIGHT THE FALL. DOWN TO THE DEPTHS OF OUR WELL-EARNED HELL."
NICE.
BYRON?
NO...

BRADDOCK.
THE PERIMETER'S SECURE. NO ONE'S GETTING IN HERE.
IS THAT ANOTHER WAY OF SAYING THAT WE'RE LOCKED IN?
I'M THE LAST CAPTAIN BRITAIN LEFT, REED. I'VE LEARNED NOT TO TAKE RISKS THAT I DON'T HAVE TO--WHAT'S IN HERE IS TOO IMPORTANT TO LOSE. SO...
YES, WE'RE LOCKED IN.
ENGAGING THE COMM SYSTEM. HOW MUCH TIME DO WE HAVE LEFT ON THE CLOCK?
BECAUSE I'M NOT SURE WE HAVE TIME TO CLOAK THE SIGNAL.
WE DON'T--HE SHOULD BE INSIDE IN THE NEXT FEW MINUTES.
HOWEVER, IT'S NEW YORK, SO HE'LL BE SCATTERING DATA OFF HUNDREDS OF NODES.
HE'LL STILL BE AT RISK...BUT WE WON'T BE A FACTOR.

MANHATTAN
LOCKING ON NOW.
S.H.I.E.L.D. STATION: GOLGOTHA
SGPS HAS A FIX. TRIANGULATING...
HE'S INSIDE ALREADY.
STARK'S LAB
CONNECTING BIOPACKAGE NOW...
WE SHOULD HAVE AUDIO IN THREE...TWO...
CONNECTED.
YOU'RE ACTIVE, CHO.
WE'RE READY WHEN YOU ARE.
I'M IN THE LAB. DATA LOOKS INTACT.
WE MAY HAVE LOST STARK, BUT WE'LL STILL HAVE ACCESS TO ALL HIS STUFF. COULD BE FUN TO TINKER WITH.

YOU READY TO RECEIVE?
SEND IT NOW.
BE-DOOP
HENRY, ARE WE GETTING IT?
WE'RE GOOD. SIGNAL'S STABLE.
ANY OTHER PROBLEMS?
NO. IT'S ALL QUIET HERE. A BIT TOO QUIET...
&%#@! NOW PROJECTING A PRETTY HIGH PROBABILITY THAT I'M TOAST.
ARE YOU SURE?
YEAH...BUT THE DATA'S ALMOST UPLOADED. ONCE THAT'S DONE, THEN I CAN JUMP OUT OF HERE...
HOPEFULLY THE FASCISTS ARE RUNNING A LITTLE SLOW TODAY.
OH, NO... S.H.I.E.L.D. HELICARRIERS ON SITE.
TRANSFER COMPLETE, REED.
JUMP OUT. NOW!
CAN'T. TRANSLOCATOR ISN'T WORKING. THEY MUST'VE ERECTED A NULL FIELD...I'M NOT GOING ANYWHERE UNLESS I GET OUTSIDE ITS RANGE.
WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO?

NO CHOICE, REALLY...
CHANGE THE--
DAMN.
THEY HAVE HIM.
NO SIGNAL

DAY TWO.
OKAY. IT'S CONNECTED.
ANYONE CARE TO EXPLAIN TO ME WHY WE DON'T JUST TRY TO CONTACT CHO THE WAY WE DID EARLIER?
THE HUNTED MUST ALWAYS BE MORE CAUTIOUS THAN THE HUNTER, CAPTAIN.
TO SAY NOTHING OF THE FACT THAT HE'S PROBABLY BEING DETAINED IN A S.H.I.E.L.D. BLACK BOX FACILITY...BUT WE CAN'T BE SURE, CAN WE?
OH. AND THAT COMMUNICATION GEAR HE WAS WEARING EARLIER? MOST LIKELY CONFISCATED.
BUT IT'S WORSE THAN THAT...
S.H.I.E.L.D.'S GOTTEN INCREDIBLY AGGRESSIVE.
IT WAS BAD ENOUGH WHEN THEIR PSI-AGENTS STARTED RUNNING GLOBAL SWEEPS FOR OUR BRAIN SIGNATURES, BUT IN THE LAST COUPLE MONTHS, THEY'VE SYSTEMICALLY ATTACKED AND CRIPPLED EVERY TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANTAGE WE'D PREVIOUSLY ENJOYED.

WHY DO YOU THINK WE JUST STARTED TRAVELING COACH, CAPTAIN? THREE WEEKS AGO, THEY CRACKED OUR TRANSLOCATING ABILITY--WE JUMP SOMEWHERE AND THEY'LL TRIANGULATE THAT SIGNAL AND BE ON TOP OF US FASTER THAN WE CAN SET UP OUR MOBILE LAB.
HOW DO YOU EXPECT THAT ALL THIS COULD POSSIBLY WORK?
WELL, CAPTAIN, THEY'RE SMART...
BUT THEY'RE NOT *THAT* SMART.
YOU KNOW THE IMPLANT I GAVE YOU MONTHS AGO WHEN YOU JOINED US?
OF COURSE.
YOU SAID IT WAS NECESSARY-- THAT YOU ALL HAD THEM.

CORRECT. AND WHILE ITS PRIMARY FUNCTION IS DISTORTING OUR BRAIN SIGNATURES TO EVADE DETECTION, IT ALSO HAPPENS TO BE THE MOST ADVANCED TRACKING/RECORDING SYSTEM EVER INVENTED.
BY A HUMAN.
THAT'S TRUE. THANK YOU, HENRY.
ALWAYS SOMETHING NEW TO STRIVE FOR.
REGARDLESS...THOUGH IT WAS NOT CONSTRUCTED FOR THIS EXACT USE, IN THEORY, THIS DEVICE CAN BE ACCESSED REMOTELY AND GIVE US ACCESS TO A...LIVE FEED OF WHAT CHO IS EXPERIENCING.
THEY WON'T BE ABLE TO *DETECT* THAT?
THE DEVICE ALGORITHMICALLY HOPS MODES AND FREQUENCIES THOUSANDS OF TIMES A MILLISECOND. UNLESS YOU KNOW THE PARAMETERS, THE DEVICE IS UNDETECTABLE.
OUR *ACCESS* OF THE DEVICE... THAT'S A LITTLE MORE TRICKY. MOST S.H.I.E.L.D. FACILITIES ARE HARD-SHIELDED AGAINST SUCH ATTEMPTS OF THIS NATURE...
BUT I THINK, BY BOUNCING--AND AMPLIFYING--THE SIGNAL THROUGH THE PLANET'S DESCENDENT CORE, I MIGHT BE...
AH!

HELLO, AMADEUS.
GOOD TO SEE YOU.
IT WORKED.
WHAT DO WE DO NOW?
NOW?
NOW WE WAIT FOR THEM TO GIVE US SOMETHING.

FOUR HOURS LATER.
LOOK...IT'S NOT LIKE I'M ASKING TO SPEAK TO MY LAWYER OR ANYTHING CRAZY LIKE THAT.
I MEAN, I'M DUMB, BUT I'M NOT *THAT* DUMB...
I'M JUST LOOKING FOR SOMETHING LIKE MAYBE A PB&J...
OR REALLY ***ANY*** CONSUMABLE BELONGING TO THE SANDWICH FAMILY.
THAT'S WHAT YOU WANT? A SANDWICH?
THAT'S ALL IT'S GOING TO TAKE TO SHUT YOU UP?
PLEASE, DEAR GOD, GIVE HIM A SANDWICH.
YEAH.
BUT I'M PARTICULAR, SO I'M GONNA NEED YOU TO CUT THE CRUST OFF.
AND THEN, WHEN YOU'VE DONE THAT, I WANT YOU TO TAKE THAT SANDWICH AND SHOVE IT STRAIGHT UP YOUR--
AGENT, THAT'S ENOUGH.
WELL, ISN'T *THIS* INTERESTING?
HMM.

YOU CAN ALL GO.
I'LL TAKE IT FROM HERE.
HELLO, AMADEUS.
I'M SUSAN RICHARDS. I'LL BE YOUR INTERROGATOR.
WE'VE MET. AND EVEN IF WE HADN'T...I'VE SEEN YOUR PICTURES.
I BELIEVE WE HAVE SOME OF THE SAME ACQUAINTANCES.
UH-HUH. IS THERE ANYTHING I CAN GET YOU BEFORE WE GET STARTED?
WELL, I'M JUST *DYING* FOR A SANDWICH.
I'M AFRAID WE'VE RUN OUT.
FIGURES. SPEND BILLIONS AND BILLIONS OF DOLLARS BUILDING FLOATING WEAPONS PLATFORMS AND REALLY, REALLY NICE JAILS, AND THEN SCRIMP ON DINNER.
SOUNDS EXACTLY LIKE THE GOVERNMENT.

YOU WORRIED ABOUT HOW YOUR HARD-EARNED TAXES ARE BEING SPENT?
IT'S HILARIOUS YOU THINK I PAY TAXES.
I AM ABSOLUTELY NOT SURPRISED YOU THINK YOU'RE ABOVE THE LAW.
OH, WHAT YOU CALL THE ***LAW***, I CALL THE ***SUBJUGAT--***
HERE'S THE THING: I KNOW WHAT YOU'RE DOING, AND I KNOW WHAT YOU'RE DOING IS ***WRONG***. I KNOW IT FOR A FACT. AND WE'RE GOING TO SIT IN THIS ROOM UNTIL YOU GIVE ME WHAT I NEED.
OH, YOU KNOW THINGS, HUH?
DID YOU ***KNOW*** THAT ONLY FOUR PERCENT OF PEOPLE THINK THEY HAVE A BELOW-AVERAGE INTELLIGENCE? FOUR PERCENT.
AND WERE YOU ALSO AWARE THAT TESTS SHOW THERE IS A DIRECT CORRELATION BETWEEN LACK OF INTELLIGENCE AND ASSUREDNESS? WHEN YOU HEAR SOMEONE SAY THEY KNOW SOMETHING "FOR A FACT"-- PICTURE THEM WITH A SIGN AROUND THEIR NECK THAT SAYS, "I'M AN IDIOT."
PRESENT COMPANY EXCLUDED, OF COURSE. BUT STILL... IT'S SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT.
WELL, WE'RE TALKING ABOUT ***YOU***, AMADEUS, AND I JUST SO HAPPEN TO HAVE YOUR S.H.I.E.L.D.-PROCURED TEST SCORES RIGHT HERE.
AND SURPRISING NO ONE, YOU DO NOT HAVE BELOW-AVERAGE INTELLIGENCE. THIS IS, IN FACT, A FACT.
LET'S SAY, HYPOTHETICALLY, THAT THERE WAS THIS PERSON WHO TESTED OUT IN THE TOP FIVE PERCENT ON ALL THE STANDARD I.Q. EXAMS. ACROSS THE BOARD. CONSISTENTLY.
NOW, YOU MIGHT ARGUE THAT THIS IS, CLEARLY, A VERY SMART, VERY SPECIAL PERSON. BUT I'D BE WILLING TO BET ALL THE MONEY IN MY POCKET AGAINST ALL THE SANDWICHES IN YOURS THAT THIS PERSON WOULD TELL YOU THAT YOU ARE WRONG.

DO YOU KNOW WHY?
WHY?
BECAUSE THIS PERSON WOULD KNOW THAT BEING IN THE TOP FIVE PERCENT STILL MEANS THAT THERE ARE **250 MILLION** OTHER PEOPLE OUT THERE AT LEAST AS SMART AS HE IS.
ONE OF 250 MILLION. WHAT'S SO SPECIAL ABOUT THAT?
NOTHING. NOT A THING.
YES, BUT THAT STORY DOESN'T REALLY APPLY TO YOU...
AFTER ALL, YOU'RE ONE OF THE TEN SMARTEST HUMANS ON THE PLANET EARTH, AREN'T YOU?
THE POINT OF THE STORY IS, I KNOW PEOPLE WHO ARE SMARTER.
SO DO I. BETTER THAN YOU EVER WILL. MAYBE BETTER THAN I KNOW MYSELF.
WANT TO KNOW WHAT ELSE I KNOW?

I AM GOING TO CATCH ALL OF YOU.
ESPECIALLY MY HUSBAND.
AND WHAT IF HE TOLD YOU HE KNEW WHAT HE WAS DOING.
WHAT WOULD YOU TELL HIM THEN?
I'D TELL HIM I'VE HEARD IT ALL BEFORE... AND TO GET USED TO SLEEPING IN A CELL.

DAY THREE.
ANY LUCK?
ALMOST THERE.
HONESTLY, IF CHO HADN'T STUCK AROUND TO THE VERY END, THIS WOULDN'T HAVE WORKED--STARK'S ENCRYPTION IS SIMPLY TOO WELL DONE.
WELL, WHAT'S THE WORD? DID CHO FALL ON HIS SWORD FOR A GOOD CAUSE, OR DOES THE GRAIL ELUDE US?
I'M IN.
WE MAY HAVE LOST STARK--
HE'S NOT LOST.
WE JUST HAVEN'T FOUND HIM YET.
EITHER WAY, WE'VE FINALLY GOT OUR HANDS ON HIS DATA.
DE-DOOP

WHAT AM I LOOKING AT?
PYM?
TOGETHER, TONY AND I ENACTED SEVERAL... **CONTINGENCY PLANS** WHEN WE FIRST LEARNED OF WHAT WE WERE FACING. YOU KNOW ABOUT SOME OF THOSE:
THE AVENGERS MACHINE, THE EXPLORER PROTOCOLS, OTHER, LESS PRACTICAL IDEAS...
YES. AND THEN BEYOND THAT, THERE WERE THE THINGS WE CREATED INDIVIDUALLY. TONY-- HE BUILT WEAPONS-- AND HE BUILT THEM WELL.
THIS IS ***SOL'S HAMMER.***
HOW MANY FILES ARE THERE?
WELL, THEY'RE NOT ALL RELEVANT. THERE APPEARS TO BE A DATABASE OF PHONE NUMBERS AND A TRULY SKETCHY SCORING SYSTEM, CORPORATE HOLDINGS, BANK ACCOUNTS...
BUT AT FIRST GLANCE, THE WEAPONS FILES APPEAR TO BE...ROBUST.
I'M COUNTING ***SIX HUNDRED AND FIFTY-THREE*** SEPARATE DESIGNS.

SEE...THIS IS WHY EVERYONE THINKS YOU PEOPLE ARE ALWAYS UP TO SOMETHING.
BECAUSE YOU ARE.
OKAY. WE NEED TO CATALO--
HOLD ON! EMERGENCY TRANSMISSION.
IT'S T'CHALLA.
REED! ARE YOU THERE? WE'RE COMING IN HOT.
HOT? YOU MEAN...
YES.
TRANSLOCATING.
YOU KNOW THEY CAN TRACK THAT NOW. IT TAKES THEM A FEW HOURS, BUT THEY HAVE THE CAPABILITY.
I KNOW, BUT WE HAVE TO RISK IT.
SO... FAILURE.
MORE BETRAYAL.
I'LL TELL THE OTHERS TO PACK. BE SAFE, MY FRIEND.

OKAY, YOU HEARD THE MAN.
WE'RE MOBILE IN UNDER AN HOUR.
BEAST, CAN YOU PLEASE...
ALREADY ON IT, REED. ANY PARTICULAR MESSAGE?
JUST MAKE SURE YOU EMBED THE CODE.
IT'S TIME WE GOT BETTER INTEL.
IS THERE A PARTICULAR TYPE OF PHRA--
INCOMING!
FWAASSHHHH!

WHAT HAPPENED?
WE LOST IT ALL. THE GOLDEN CITY HAS CRUMBLED.
WAKANDA IS GONE.

“ARCHANGEL”

ROME.
THIS IS ARCHANGEL COMMAND. WE HAVE JUST ENTERED ITALIAN AIRSPACE FROM THE MEDITERRANEAN WITHOUT STATE CLEARANCE-- SO WE ARE ON A COUNTDOWN.
LET'S DO THIS WITH **SPEED**, PEOPLE. ADVANCE TEAM?
ON THE JUMP DECK. AT THE READY.
WAITING ON YOUR ORDER TO ENGAGE.
YOU HAVE IT.
ENGAGE.
GO! GO! GO!

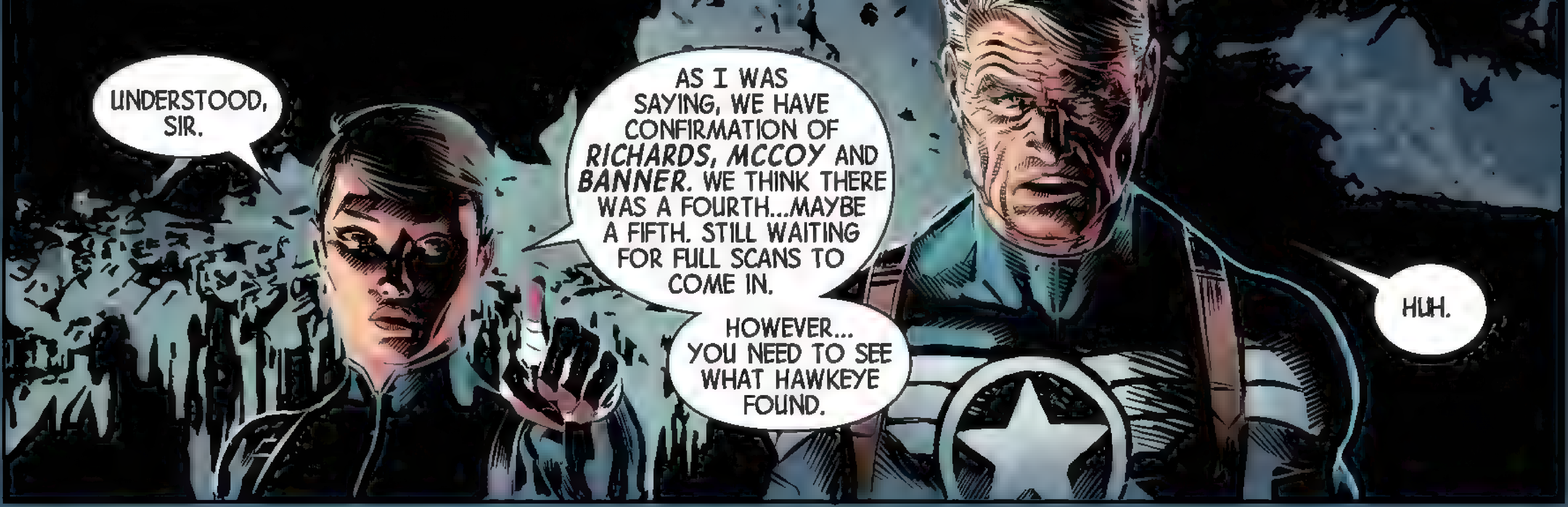
WE'RE DOWN.
TARGETING SYSTEM ONLINE.
WE'VE ACQUIRED THE TRANSLOCATION RESONANCE. THIS *IS* THE LOCATION.
WE'VE GOT A LOCK.
THE DRILL'S ONLINE AND THE SITE IS PREPPED.
WHAT ABOUT THE CARGO?
READY TO DEPLOY.

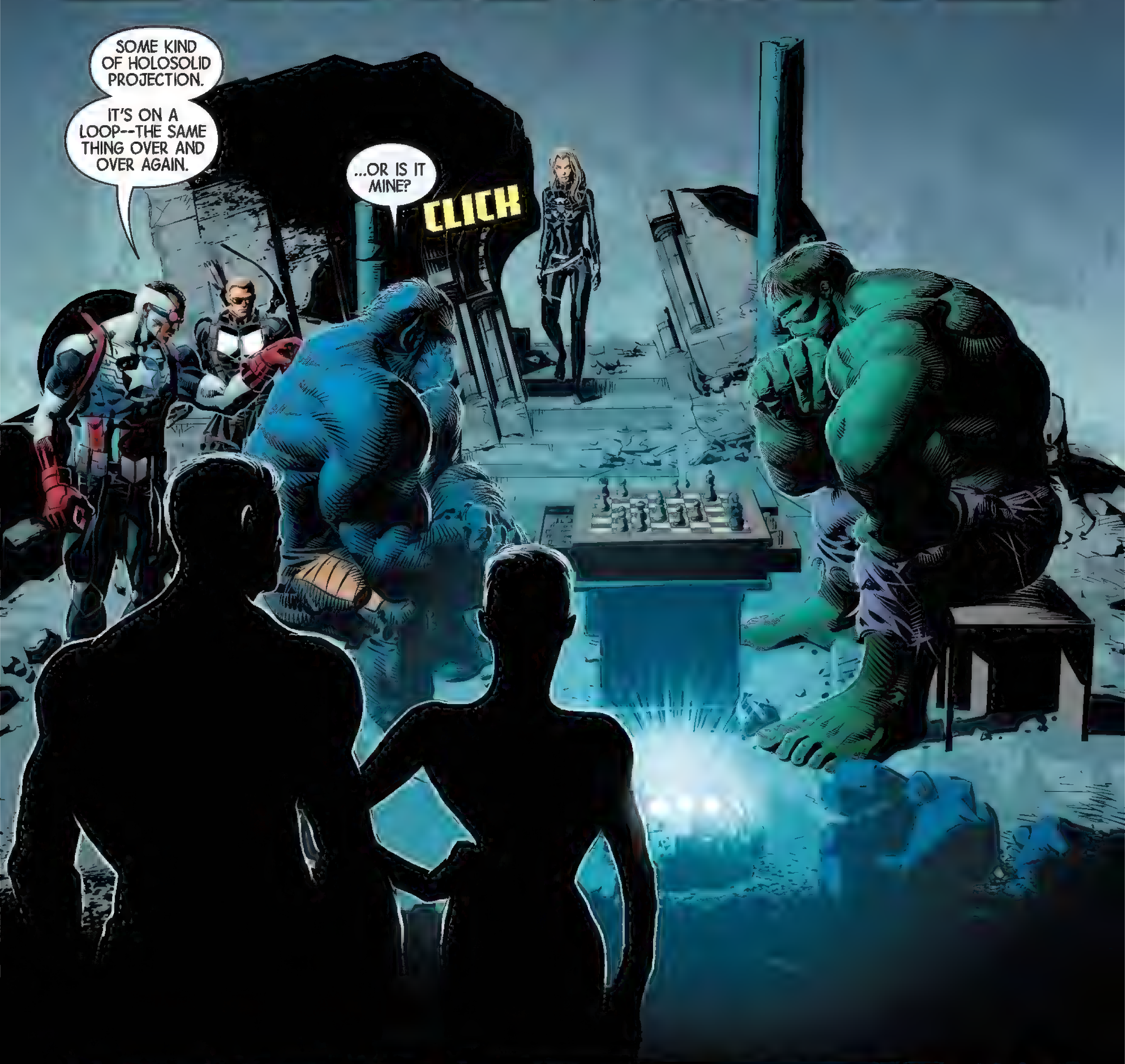
OKAY. DRILL'S STABLE...
TUNNELING THE PACKAGE.
CRASHHH
ARCHANGEL...
THIS IS *HAWKEYE.* I'M IN THE CITY.

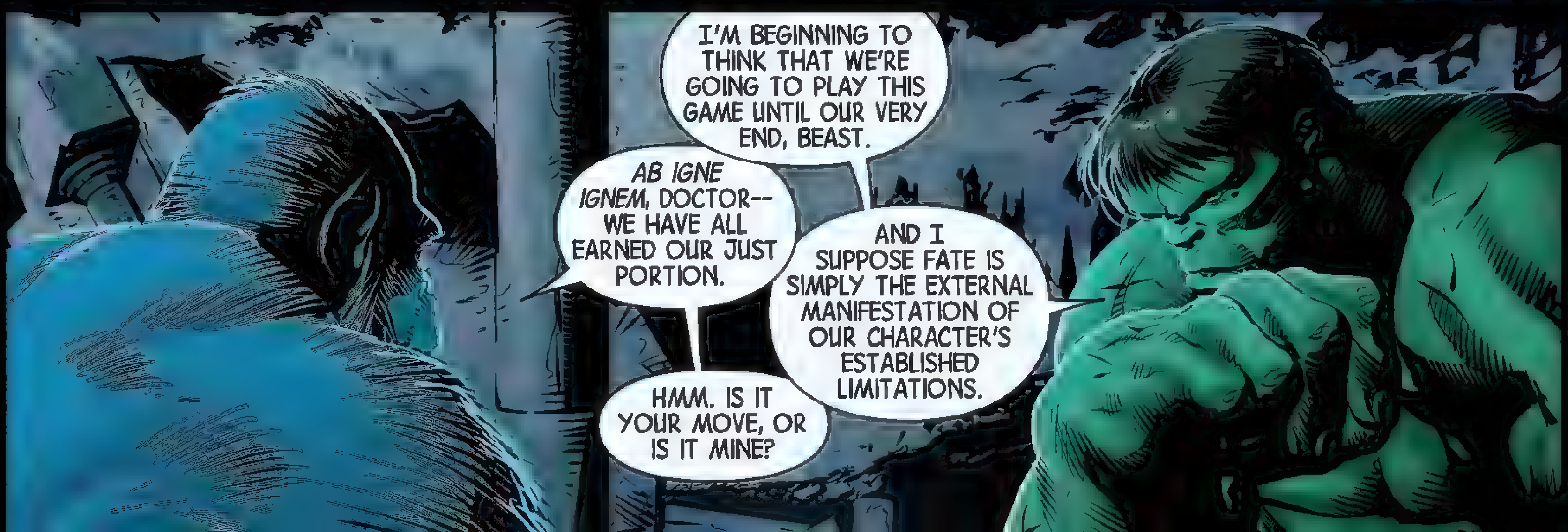
FROM THE SKY WE'RE GETTING NOTHING ON THERMALS.
AND MOTION TRACKING IS UNRELIABLE DUE TO THE DENSITY AND AGE OF THE CITY.
SO BE CAREFUL.
YEAH. WILL DO...
BUT YOUR CONCERN MIGHT BE WASTED--I THINK WE'RE TOO LATE. AGAIN.
NOTHING DOWN HERE BUT ME AND--
IT'S A QUANDARY, ISN'T IT? A CHOICE THAT REPRESENTS A COMMITMENT TO ACTION.
GOT SOMETHING.
STAND BY...
OH.
DAMN.
WHAT IS IT?
TOUGH TO EXPLAIN. YOU NEED TO GET DOWN HERE, STEVE...

YOU'RE GOING TO WANT TO SEE THIS FOR YOURSELF.

LATER.
FORENSIC TEAMS ARE COMBING THROUGH THE PLACE WITH A FINE-TOOTHED COMB.
WE'RE USING PRETTY MUCH EVERY TRICK WE HAVE. MICROSCOPIC D.N.A. TRACERS, RESIDUE SNIFFERS LOOKING FOR LATENT POWER SIGNATURES...
EVEN THE PSI-AGENTS ARE WORKING IN A LOW-YIELD TEMPORAL CAGE TO TRY TO PICK UP ANY STRAY THOUGHTS THEY MIGHT HAVE LEFT BEHIND.
LET ME GUESS, HILL: WE CAN CONFIRM THEY WERE HERE... BUT OTHER THAN THAT... NOTHING.
AND THEY'VE SLIPPED AWAY ONCE MORE.
WELL...WE'VE GOTTEN PLENTY OF D.N.A. HITS. CONFIRMATION OF MISTER FANTASTIC--
DON'T DO THAT.
DO WHAT?
DON'T REFER TO THESE PEOPLE BY THOSE NAMES. THAT'S NOT WHO THEY ARE ANYMORE.
THEY DON'T GET TO HAVE THAT.


UNDERSTOOD, SIR.
AS I WAS SAYING, WE HAVE CONFIRMATION OF **RICHARDS, McCOY** AND **BANNER.** WE THINK THERE WAS A FOURTH...MAYBE A FIFTH. STILL WAITING FOR FULL SCANS TO COME IN.
HOWEVER... YOU NEED TO SEE WHAT HAWKEYE FOUND.
HUH.


SOME KIND OF HOLOSOLID PROJECTION.
IT'S ON A LOOP--THE SAME THING OVER AND OVER AGAIN.
...OR IS IT MINE?
CLICK


I'M BEGINNING TO THINK THAT WE'RE GOING TO PLAY THIS GAME UNTIL OUR VERY END, BEAST.
AB IGNE IGNEM, DOCTOR-- WE HAVE ALL EARNED OUR JUST PORTION.
AND I SUPPOSE FATE IS SIMPLY THE EXTERNAL MANIFESTATION OF OUR CHARACTER'S ESTABLISHED LIMITATIONS.
HMM. IS IT YOUR MOVE, OR IS IT MINE?

CLICK
I'M BEGINNING TO THINK THAT...
THEY LOOK TIRED.
IT'S CALLED LOOKING GUILTY, SUSAN.
WELL, ANY THOUGHTS AS TO WHAT WE SHOULD DO WITH THIS?
"IS IT YOUR MOVE... OR IS IT MINE?"
YOU THINK?
COULD BE.
CLICK
QUEEN TO KNIGHT FOUR.
CLICK
HELLO, STEVE.
IT'S BEEN A WHILE.

HOW DOES IT--
I BET YOU'RE WONDERING HOW WE KNOW IT'S YOU.
IT'S TRUE THAT THE INTERACTIVITY ON THIS PROGRAM IS FAIRLY LIMITED-- I MEAN, I COULD ONLY ACCOMPLISH SO MUCH IN THE FIVE MINUTES I SPENT SETTING THIS UP--BUT THE QUESTION--
HOW DO THEY KNOW IT'S ME?
WELL, IT'S A FAIR ONE TO ASK. SO HERE'S YOUR ANSWER:
EVERYONE LIKES TO THINK THEY'RE *SPECIAL.* THAT THEY ARE SOME UNIQUE COMBINATION OF PERSONALITY, HISTORY AND COGNITIVE ABILITY...
BUT THE TRUTH IS, THOSE ARE JUST TICKED BOXES THAT GIVE US INSIGHT INTO HOW EACH PERSON IS HARD-WIRED.
STUDY PERSONALITIES LONG ENOUGH AND YOU GET TO KNOW THEM LIKE THE BACK OF YOUR HAND.
I DON'T BUY THIS AT ALL.
HE'S BLUFFING.
NOW...IT'S POSSIBLE YOU THINK I'M BEING DISINGENUOUS.
BUT WOULD YOU BE SURPRISED TO KNOW THAT THERE'S A NINETY-FIVE PERCENT CHANCE THAT EITHER CLINT, SAM...OR SUB-DIRECTOR HILL IS WITH YOU? THERE'S AN EIGHTY PERCENT CHANCE THAT YOU BROUGHT ALL THREE.
I'D TAKE THOSE ODDS.
AND, OH MY STARS, THERE'S EVEN A SIXTY-EIGHT PERCENT CHANCE THAT YOU ASKED ***SUSAN RICHARDS*** TO JOIN YOU. AND IF YOU ASKED, THERE'S AN EIGHTY-THREE PERCENT CHANCE SHE SAID YES. *AB INTRA.*

SO WHAT DOES ALL THIS MEAN?
WHY, PRAY TELL, AM I TELLING YOU *ALL THIS?*
IF YOU'RE GOING TO GET *SERIOUS* ABOUT CATCHING US...YOU'RE GOING TO HAVE TO COME TO GRIPS WITH YOUR SHORTCOMINGS AND ADJUST ACCORDINGLY.
AFTER ALL, WE'RE NOT PLAYING A GAME WITH SOME KIND OF *ARBITRARY RULES*, STEVE.
WE'RE PLAYING *YOU.*
BETTER UP YOUR GAME...
SON.
STEVE, I...
NO. WE'RE DONE HERE. I WANT EVERYONE TO PACK UP.

GIVE ME THE ROOM.

KZZAK
KSSH

LATER.
AND SO I ASK YOU...WHOM CAN WE TRUST? THE LUCKY FEW WHO DARE TO STAND ABOVE US, LOOKING DOWN IN PITY AT THOSE WHO NEED THEIR PROTECTION?
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE UNITED NATIONS.
THE LUCKY FEW WHO, BECAUSE THEY KEEP US *SAFE*, DECIDE WHAT WE *SHOULD* AND SHOULD *NOT* KNOW ABOUT THE REAL THREATS WE FACE?
OR SHOULD WE TRUST IN THE TRUTH? AND FACE THE THINGS THAT WE ALL FEAR TOGETHER KNOWING THAT, AT THE VERY LEAST, WE DECIDED OUR OWN FATE?
WHY ARE YOU WATCHING THIS AGAIN, SUSAN?
WE JUST GOT THE ANALYTICS BACK FROM THE GUYS IN THE HEAD SHOP--THE BEHAVIORAL STUDIES GROUP.
WE HAD AN UNGODLY AMOUNT OF CAMERAS IN THE U.N. BUILDING--JUST A TON OF DATA--AND EVEN THOUGH IT WAS GOING TO TAKE THEM FOREVER, I HAD THEM GO THROUGH AND ANALYZE EVERYTHING...
YOU KNOW, CATALOG THE RESPONSES TO THE GOOD AMBASSADOR'S SPEECH.
MOST OF WHAT WE'LL LEARN ISN'T ACTIONABLE...BUT AT LEAST WE'LL FIND OUT WHO ALREADY KNEW WHAT SHE WAS GOING TO SAY, WHO WAS SYMPATHETIC, AND WHICH OF OUR...*FRIENDS* SOON DECIDED THE BEST BET WAS LAYING DOWN WITH THE ENEMY.
HERE IT COMES.

THESE ARE ALL REASONABLE QUESTIONS. THEY ARE THE QUESTIONS I ASKED MYSELF WHEN I FOUND OUT EARLIER TODAY THAT "THE LUCKY FEW" HAVE **SECRETS.**
NOT THE NORMAL, SOMEWHAT EXCUSABLE SECRETS WE ARE USED TO, BUT, FRANKLY, THE MOST TERRIFYING THING I HAVE EVER HEARD.
I LEARNED OUR WORLD--OUR **UNIVERSE**--IS **DYING.** AND THESE...LUCKY FEW...
THESE... **HEROES** HAVE KNOWN THIS FOR QUITE SOME TIME.
I FIND THAT UNACCEPTABLE, AND I'M SURE YOU DO AS WELL.
NOW WOULD YOU LOOK AT THAT.
BE-DOOP
HEAD SHOP SAYS THAT LESS THAN FIVE PERCENT OF THE U.N.'S GENERAL ASSEMBLY DIDN'T KNOW OR WASN'T IMMEDIATELY SYMPATHETIC.
UNDERSTAND WHAT THAT MEANS, STEVE?
NINETY-FIVE PERCENT OF THE MEMBER NATIONS DECIDED WHAT TO DO AT A *LATER DATE.*
THE LEADERS OF THOSE COUNTRIES--INFORMED BY WHAT THEY LEARNED AND HOW THEIR CITIZENS RESPONDED--SAT DOWN AND MADE A CONSCIOUS DECISION TO BUY IN.
DOES THAT MAKE THEM MORALLY REPUGNANT...OR DOES IT MAKE US LOOK LIKE RUBES?
STILL, YOU GOTTA ADMIT--TWO DAYS LATER AT THE SECURITY COUNCIL MEETING, *TERRAX THE TRULY ENLIGHTENED* MADE THE CABAL'S CASE WELL.
WE DID NOT CAUSE THIS, AND JUST LIKE YOU...WE DID NOT ASK FOR THIS FATE. BUT UNLIKE *THE ILLUMINATI,* WE WILL NOT HIDE IT FROM YOU--WE WILL NOT SIMPLIFY THE MORAL DILEMMA. WE WILL NOT TAKE *THAT CHOICE* FROM YOU--AS THAT IS *YOURS* TO MAKE.
SO, PLEASE... CHOOSE TO SLEEP AT NIGHT. SOUNDLY.
KNOWING WE ENSURED THAT THE NEXT DAY THE SUN WILL SURELY RISE. FOR YOU...

AND FOR ALL MANKIND.
THEN YOU GOT UP AND TRIED TO BEAT HIM TO DEATH WITH YOUR CANE.
WHICH, OF COURSE, ONLY MADE THEIR CASE STRONGER. AND A WEEK LATER--AFTER ALL THE SCREAMING, YELLING AND EVENTUAL COMPROMISE--EVERYONE HAD AGREED TO LOOK THE OTHER WAY AND LET THE CABAL DO THE UNTHINKABLE.
SO WHEN THEY ASKED FOR WAKANDA IN EXCHANGE, WHO COULD DENY THEM? FOR ALL SOULS HAD ALREADY BEEN SOLD.
I JUST REALIZED...I NEVER ASKED:
WHEN DID YOU FIND OUT?
NOT LONG AFTER YOU DID.
DID REED TELL YOU WHAT THEY DID TO ME?
"YES."
AND HOW DID YOU FEEL ABOUT THAT?
FURIOUS. BUT EXHAUSTED MORE THAN ANYTHING ELSE...
IT'S THE *AMBIGUITY*. SEE, THERE'S A PIECE OF ME THAT WANTS TO ALWAYS BELIEVE IN HIM UNCONDITIONALLY.
BUT DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA HOW MANY TIMES HE'S LEFT ME IN THE DARK? AND *THIS?* WELL...

IF YOU ASK ME, IT SOUNDS LIKE BOTH OF YOU GOT IN BED WITH THE WRONG PEOPLE.
THE PRESIDENT CALLED, STEVE--HE'S *FURIOUS*. WE STILL HAVE HIS SUPPORT, BUT WE CAN'T PUT HIM OUT ON A LIMB WITH THE OTHER NATION STATES. HE SAID TO REMIND YOU...
FULL DISCRETION INSIDE U.S. BORDERS, BUT YOU NEED AUTHORIZATION FOR THESE EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES.
AND I'VE GOT THE LATEST STATUS REPORT.
YOU WANT TO DO IT NOW...OR DO YOU NEED TO CALL HOME?
THE PRESIDENT CAN WAIT, CAROL.
DO I NEED TO LEAVE?
NO.
YOU CAN HEAR THIS. I ACTUALLY LIFTED YOUR CLEARANCE RESTRICTIONS AFTER THE THING WITH CHO.
WE'RE SEVERAL MONTHS IN AND YOU'VE MORE THAN PROVED YOURSELF.
WELCOME TO THE RABBIT HOLE, SUSAN.
GOING DOWN.
THIS IS FOOTAGE FROM THE S.H.I.E.L.D. ORBITAL PLATFORM STATIONED OVER WAKANDA SHOWING THE ORIGINATION OF THE TRANSLOCATION SIGNATURE WE TRACED TO ROME.
CONFIRMED AS THE *BLACK PANTHER*.
WE ALSO GOT AN ADDITIONAL D.N.A. HIT FROM THE ROME SITE.
CONFIRMED AS *BRIAN BRADDOCK, CAPTAIN BRITAIN*. WHICH WOULD MAKE THIS ONLY OUR SECOND CONFIRMATION OF HIM BEING ATTACHED TO THE ILLUMINATI. STILL, IT'S CONFIRMATION...
MAKES SENSE. MULTI-DIMENSIONAL CORPS POLICING MANY WORLDS. MIGHT ALSO EXPLAIN WHY WE HAVEN'T SEEN HIM MUCH.
MORE IMPORTANTLY, HE MIGHT HAVE SOME INSIGHT THAT WE DO NOT.
HE'S GOT FAMILY. CAN WE REACH OUT?

BETSY BRADDOCK-- *PSYLOCKE*--IS PROTECTED BY THE X-NATION. WE CAN'T GET TO HER, THE SAME WAY WE CAN'T GET TO BEAST.
WE'D HAVE TO CATCH HER OFF BASE...WHICH MEANS DIVERTING ASSETS. IS THAT SOMETHING YOU WANT TO DO?
NO. WE CAN'T SPARE THEM.
OUR OWN GOVERNMENT BARELY TOLERATES US, AND AFTER TODAY, WE'RE GOING TO HAVE ZERO ROPE BEYOND U.S. BORDERS.
WHAT ABOUT THE OTHER UNACCOUNTED FOR ILLUMINATI?
WHAT ABOUT *BLACK BOLT?*
STILL SEEMINGLY DISCONNECTED FROM THE OTHER ILLUMINATI MEMBERS, BUT WE'RE EVEN *LESS* ACCEPTED IN *ATTILAN* THAN ELSEWHERE.
ANYTHING ELSE?
ROBERTO DA COSTA HAS BEEN MAKING SOME NOISE.
YOU KNOW HOW WE WERE WONDERING WHERE HYPERION DISAPPEARED TO? APPARENTLY, HE'S COORDINATING THE MERGER OF TECHNOLOGICAL ASSETS BETWEEN HIS NEW BOSS AND HIS BOSS'S MOST RECENT ACQUISITION.
SUNSPOT BOUGHT *A.I.M.?*
UH-HUH. REVEALED IT TO HIS SHAREHOLDERS TWO DAYS AGO. APPARENTLY, HE'S SECRETLY BEEN IN CONTROL THROUGH A HOLDING COMPANY FOR SOME TIME.

HE BOUGHT *A.I.M.*
THAT'S... THAT'S...WELL, KIND OF BRILLIANT.
I TELL YOU, PEOPLE WITH MONEY ARE WORTH KEEPING AROUND.
MAYBE WE SHOULD HAVE TRIED A BIT HARDER TO DO THAT.
...
ANYTHING ELSE?
THE U.N. IS STILL CORDONING OFF ALL INCURSION POINTS. WE'RE PRETTY SURE THERE WAS ONE AROUND THE SAME TIME WE PICKED UP THE TRANSLOCATION SIGNAL. BUT YOU KNOW THAT ALREADY.
SO, YEAH... I GUESS THAT'S IT.
THAT'S IT?
IT IS.
OKAY.
SUSAN?
YES, STEVE?
PLEASE EXCUSE US.

YOU WANT TO FUSS AT ME ABOUT THE DA COSTA THING?
YOU KNOW BETTER THAN THAT.
YEAH.
SO?
SO I DON'T HAVE ANYTHING ELSE. THIS IS ALL THE INFORMATION I HAVE.
WHAT ABOUT *YOU?* IS THERE SOMETHING ELSE I SHOULD KNOW?
HAVE YOU FOUND OUT SOMETHING?
CAROL, WE'VE BEEN OVER THIS SEVERAL TIMES. I DON'T KNOW WHERE ***NATASHA*** AND ***JESSICA*** DISAPPEARED TO. I DON'T.
WE FOUND THEIR R.F.I.D. IMPLANTS IN EL PASO--THEY'D BEEN REMOVED--AND THEN THEY BOTH JUST DISAPPEARED. WHICH, I SHOULDN'T HAVE TO REMIND YOU, THEY ARE BOTH TRAINED TO DO.
IF THEY DON'T WANT TO BE FOUND, AND THEY'RE CAREFUL, THEY'RE NOT *GOING* TO BE FOUND.
YOU THINK THEY JUST QUIT?
I'M SUPPOSED TO BELIEVE THAT?
MAYBE THEY RAN OFF TO JOIN THE GUY WITH ALL THE MONEY.
...
WE SHOULD'VE DONE BETTER WITH THAT.
YES, WE SHOULD HAVE.

I'M GOING TO BED.
OKAY.
AND CAROL.
YEAH?
DON'T EVER COME INTO ONE OF THESE MEETINGS AGAIN WITHOUT HAVING A REPORT ON RICHARDS OR STARK. EVEN IF IT'S JUST TO SAY THERE'S NOTHING NEW TO REPORT. NOT EVER AGAIN.
THEY ARE PRIORITY ONE. WITH A BULLET. ALL. YEAR. LONG.
YOU UNDERSTAND?
YES, SIR.
OKAY. GOOD NIGHT.
BE-DOOP
SO, PLEASE... CHOOSE TO SLEEP AT NIGHT. SOUNDLY.
KNOWING WE ENSURED THAT THE NEXT DAY THE SUN WILL SURELY RISE. FOR YOU...AND FOR ALL MANKIND.
YOUR DAY'S COMIN' *TOO*, PAL.

TWO DAYS LATER.
YOU CAN COME OUT. I'M ALONE.
I KNOW.
YEAH, BUT DO YOU KNOW BECAUSE YOU CHECKED, OR BECAUSE YOU TRUST ME?
Subway
Station
R W
EXIT
I'LL *ALWAYS* TRUST YOU, SUSAN.
YEAH...BUT, YOU KNOW... *I* WOULD HAVE CHECKED.
I KNOW THAT TOO.
I LIKE THE BEARD.
IT'S MY ROAD BEARD.

WELL...I HAVE SOME BAD NEWS, SPORT. YOU WERE *WRONG.*
OH?
YEAH, THEY LET ME IN TWO DAYS EARLIER THAN YOU PROJECTED.
WELL, MRS. RICHARDS, YOU'RE A VERY CHARMING AND PERSUASIVE WOMAN...
I WATCHED YOU INTERROGATE CHO.
I *THOUGHT* I MIGHT'VE BEEN SPEAKING TO AN AUDIENCE. HOW DID YOU BEAT THE SECURITY OF...YOU KNOW WHAT, NEVER MIND. IT'S BETTER IF I DON'T KNOW.
HERE'S HIS PRISONER I.D. NUMBER, TRAVEL SCHEDULE AND TRACKING FREQUENCY. YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO INTERCEPT HIM, BUT...
THEY COULD BE FEEDING YOU BAD INTEL. THE FREQUENCY WILL BE ENOUGH--WE'LL RETRIEVE HIM NEXT TIME WE CHANGE LOCATIONS.
I MISS YOU.
I CAN TELL. *AB INTRA?*
THAT WAS CLUMSY.
I MISS YOU TOO.
HOW ARE THE KIDS?
AS GOOD AS THEY CAN BE. THEY BOTH MISS YOU VERY MUCH. FRANKLIN IS... WELL...
HE STILL THINKS HE DISAPPOINTED YOU.

I SHOULD NEVER HAVE DONE THAT.
I SHOULD NEVER HAVE ASKED...I...
I KNOW. WE ALL KNOW.
HE'S JUST HURTING.
AND VAL?
VAL...VAL BELIEVES SHE'S ONTO SOMETHING. VAL THINKS SHE AND THE OTHER KIDS HAVE FIGURED OUT THE SOLUTION TO YOUR PROBLEM.
WHAT?
SHE WANTED ME TO GIVE YOU THIS.
DID YOU LOOK AT IT?
I DID. AND THEN I ALMOST DIDN'T BRING IT.
BUT YOU DID...
AND NOW I HAVE TO GO.

I THINK WE'RE RUNNING OUT OF TIME, REED. IF WE'RE GOING TO DO SOMETHING, IT MUST BE SOON.
OH, AND ONE OTHER THING...
VAL'S SPECIAL AND I LOVE HER DEARLY. BUT SHE'S NOT PERFECT, SHE'S NOT *ALWAYS* RIGHT--SHE HAS THE SAME FLAWS YOU DO.
SHE'S JUST A CHILD...
AND I THINK YOU SHOULD BURN THAT.
Dad,
You can't win.
Time to start figuring out how not to lose.
Val

“CAGES”

NECROPOLIS.
WAKANDA.

PATIENCE.
PATIENCE IS WHAT IT TAKES IF ONE IS TO ENDURE THE INDIGNITY OF CAPTIVITY.
THE PROBLEM, OF COURSE, WITH PATIENCE IS THAT IT DEMANDS SUBSERVIENCE.
YOU HAVE TO HUMBLE YOURSELF. OVERCOME ONE'S NATURAL INSTINCT TO FIGHT OR FLEE.
DO YOU KNOW WHAT I THINK?
THAT'S ONLY POSSIBLE FOR SOMEONE WHO BELIEVES IN SOMETHING--OR, SPECIFICALLY, SOME*ONE*--TO SUCH AN EXTENT THAT THEY REDUCE THEIR EXISTENCE TO A SECONDARY POSITION.
MY LIFE MEANS NOTHING COMPARED TO RABUM ALAL. I CAN ENDURE ANYTHING FOR HIM.

WHICH IS WHY *I* DID NOT BREAK...AND *YOU* WILL.
WHO HAVE YOU EVER SERVED, ANTHONY, BEYOND YOURSELF?

LATVERIA.
BE-DOOP
HELLO?
HELLO, VALERIA.
UGH! FINALLY.
WHAT TOOK YOU SO LONG? I'VE BEEN SITTING HERE WAITING FOR SOM--
IS THAT DOOM?
TELL HIM I HAVE SOME BIG IDEAS WORTH EXPLORING. TRULY DEVIOUS STUFF.

I'M LOOKING FOR AGGRESSIVE PARTNERS...I HAVE FRANCHISE OPPORTUNITIES AVAILABLE!
PRIVATE CONVERSATION, BENTLEY. UNDERSTAND?
PRIVATE!
I HAVE PLANS, VAL!
PLANS!
GLORIOUS PLANS!
HE'S GONE NOW, UNCLE DOOM.
SORRY. YOU KNOW WHAT THEY SAY ABOUT FRIENDS.
YES, VALERIA, EVERYONE NEEDS A FEW. FOR AT TIMES THEY CAN BE...
USEFUL.
DO YOU KNOW WHY I'VE CALLED?
UH, I HAVE A PRETTY GOOD IDEA.
WORLDS COLLIDING. EVERYTHING ENDING...
IS THAT WHERE YOU WANNA START?

HAVE YOU SPOKEN WITH YOUR FATHER ABOUT THIS?
NO. I THINK MOM'S PLAYING THINGS SAFE.
BUT BEFORE HE DISAPPEARED, HE GOT ME A COPY OF ALL HIS DATA. I'VE STUDIED IT, AND COME TO SOME CONCLUSIONS...
I'M GUESSING BY NOW HE KNOWS WHAT THEY ARE.
HOW ABOUT YOU, UNCLE DOOM... YOU WANNA KNOW WHAT I THINK?
YES.
THEN I'LL TELL YOU THE SAME THING I TOLD HIM:
YOU CAN'T WIN.
WHAT YOU HAVE TO DO IS START FIGURING OUT HOW **NOT TO LOSE.**

"HOW NOT TO LOSE..."
WHAT DOES SHE MEAN?
TRULY OMINOUS THINGS, THINKER...
BUT THAT'S NOT OUR CURRENT CONCERN.
IN FACT, IT MATTERS LITTLE WHAT SHE, OR HER FATHER, OR ANY OF THOSE OTHER SO-CALLED GREAT MINDS BELIEVE...
THEIR CURRENT CONCLUSIONS ARE IRRELEVANT--AS THEIR GOALS ARE NOT NECESSARILY OUR OWN.
OPEN THE CHAMBER.
DID YOU SEE IT, VICTOR? HOW THEY COLLAPSED...
DID YOU SEE THE *SHAPE* OF IT?
HAVE YOU SLEPT, MISTER REECE?
LIKE AN OBJECT AT REST.
FREE FROM EXTERNAL CONSTRAINT.
AND DID YOU *DREAM?*

YES. ALWAYS THE SAME DREAM.
ALWAYS THE SAME.
TIME AND TIME AND TIME AGAIN.
I'M REPEATING MYSELF NOW BECAUSE THERE'S LESS OF ME.
TELL ME.
I DREAMT OF SYMMETRY.
OF THE SHAPE OF WHAT'S WAITING FOR US OUT THERE. OF WHAT'S LOOMING IN THE ETHER.
WE HAVE TO STOP IT, VICTOR.
CAN IT BE STOPPED? CAN *YOU* STOP IT?
CAN YOU SAVE ME? US? ALL OF US?
I BELIEVE I CAN...
BUT I REQUIRE YOUR ASSISTANCE.
ME?
I'D LOVE TO HELP.
THEN YOU MUST CEASE THE PLAGUED THINKING THAT HAS INFECTED THE WORLD OUT THERE, MISTER REECE.
THINK LESS OF HOW IT ENDS...AND CONSIDER HOW IT ALL *BEGAN.*

NECROPOLIS.
THANOS IS NOT PLEASED, PROXIMA...
HE FINDS THAT VARIABLES CHAFE, AND THIS LATEST ONE--A MOST COARSE KERNEL OF ENLIGHTENMENT.
THANOS FINDS ALL OF LIVING AN IRRITANT, CORVUS...FORGIVE ME IF I DON'T LEAP BEFORE SO ORDERED.
THIS IS DIFFERENT. THIS... *CHANGE* AT THE INCURSION POINTS.
WE'VE KILLED, WHAT, DOZENS OF WORLDS BY NOW?
FOURTEEN, HUSBAND. FOURTEEN RIGHTEOUS AND GLORIOUS ANNIHILATIONS.
AND EACH TIME, AS SOON AS THE WORLD IS GONE, THE INCURSION POINT COLLAPSES.
BUT NOW, ACCORDING TO OUR MASTER, IT LINGERS--NOT LONG, BUT ENOUGH FOR THANOS TO CATALOG.
SO?
THAT PERIOD OF TIME IS EXPANDING. THANOS BELIEVES THAT--
HOLD.

WHAT...?
I THOUGHT... I WAS CERTAIN THAT...THERE WAS SOMEONE...
AND APPARENTLY I WAS WRONG.
JUMPY. LIKE A HURR IN WATER.
HRMPT.
SO... EXPANSION.
YES. THANOS SAYS THE CONCERN IS FOUND IN THE CONNECTIVE TISSUE--WHAT LINGERS SHOULD NOT EXIST--AND THEN HE BEGINS TO RAMBLE ON ABOUT BUBBLES OF OTHER...
"DESPAIR..."

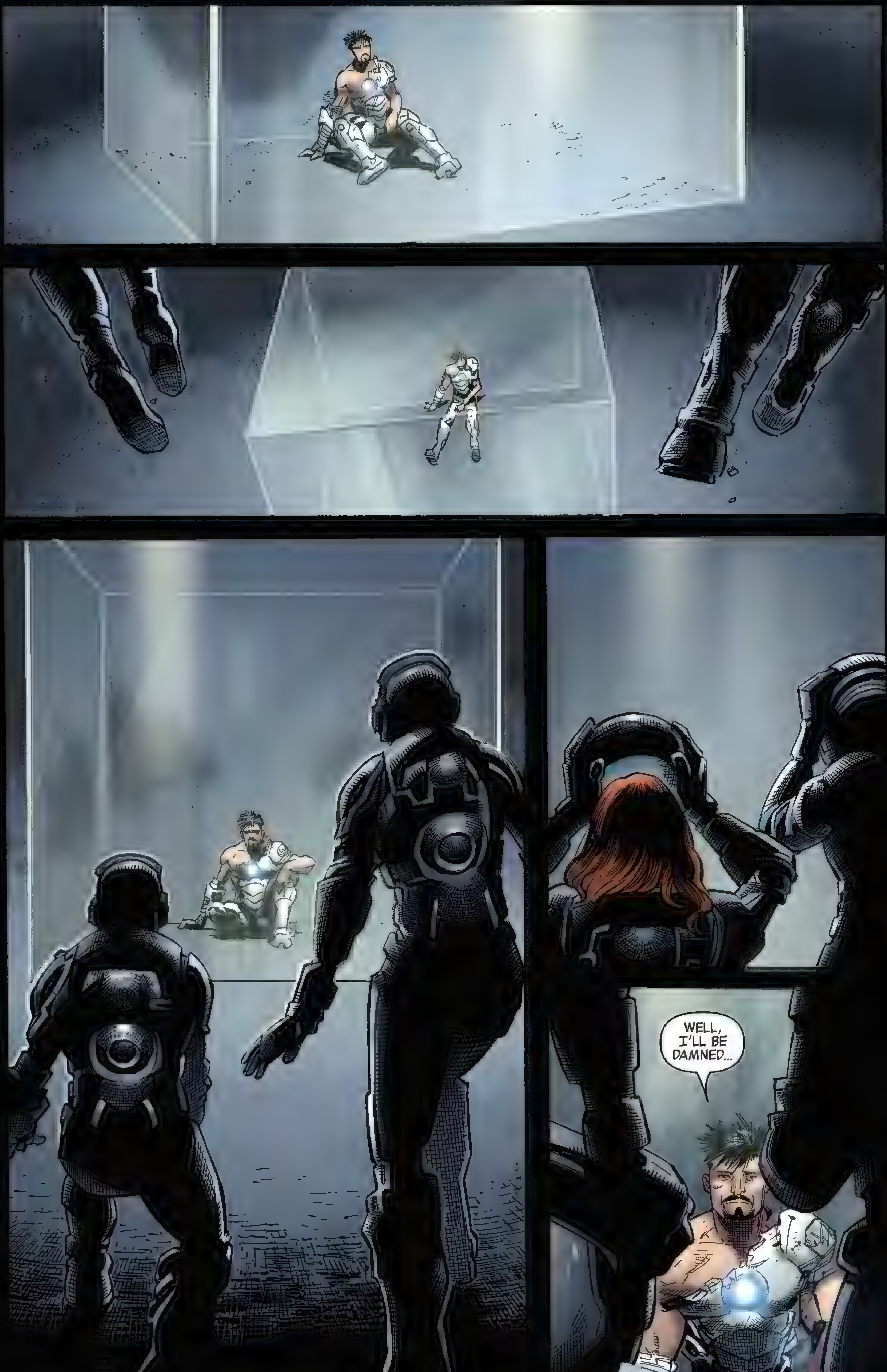
DESPAIR LEADS TO DESPERATION-- A LAND THAT NO MAN SHOULD LONG TO VISIT--BUT FOR *YOU*, STARK...
FOR YOU THERE IS WHERE HOPE CAN BE FOUND. BECAUSE YOU CAN STILL BE USEFUL. YOU CAN STILL HELP SHAPE THE VERY END OF THINGS. YOU CAN--
DAY AFTER DAY.
I'VE BEEN HERE FOR MONTHS NOW. SITTING IN THIS BOX, HOUR BLEEDING INTO HOUR.
THEY SAY THAT ISOLATION IS THE SUREST PATH TO MADNESS, BUT I'VE FOUND IT... ILLUMINATING.
I HAVE FOUND A CONSTANT THAT NEVER FAILS.
YOU.
EVERY DAY--DAY AFTER DAY--YOU SHOW UP. OFFERING ME A WAY OUT. OFFERING ME YOUR LATEST FLAVOR OF SALVATION.
WHAT?
I USED TO THINK IT HAD TO DO WITH ME BEING A GENERALLY USEFUL GUY--A BUILDER--BUT YOU KNOW WHAT I THINK NOW?

I THINK YOU'RE IN LOVE.
DON'T BE OFFENDED--I THINK YOU'VE BEEN LOOKING FOR A WAY OUT FOR A VERY LONG TIME, AND NOW THAT WE'RE FINALLY GETTING DOWN TO IT...I JUST MIGHT BE YOUR LAST, BEST HOPE.
IT REALLY COMES DOWN TO THE SCIENCE OF ATTRACTION WITHIN CLEARLY DEFINED LIMITS. YOU'RE BOUND BY EVER-REDUCING OPTIONS AND PROXIMITY, KIDDO...
PLUS... LOOK AT THIS FACE.
I'M NOT LOOKING FOR A WAY OUT, ANTHONY. AS I HAVE TOLD YOU FROM THE VERY FIRST TIME I MET ANY OF YOU: THERE IS NO OUT.
THERE IS NO ESCAPING THIS.
I'LL CONCEDE, YOU PUT ON A GOOD SHOW...BUT THE PROBLEM IS I KNOW IT'S AN *ACT*. SEE, REED TOLD ME WHAT YOU'RE HIDING INSIDE OF YOU.
YOUR LITTLE SECRET.

"EXTENSIVE D.N.A. SAMPLES--FULL MEDICALS AND BRAIN SCANS, INCLUDING COGNITIVE MAPPING."
YOU'RE JUMPING FROM WORLD TO WORLD, LOOKING FOR A REFUGE SO YOU CAN REGROW YOUR LOVED ONES AND GET YOUR FAMILY BACK.
YOU'RE NOT A *BLACK SWAN* AT ALL...
YOU JUST PRESENT AS ONE.
AND WHO ARE YOU BUT WHAT THE WHEEL HAS MADE YOU?
A GOOD MAN? I THINK NOT.
LOOK AT WHAT YOU BECAME. LOOK AT THE THINGS YOU MADE.
LOOK AT WHERE YOU *ARE*.
YOU FORGET... I WAS THERE THE *LAST* TIME YOU TRIED TO BE A HERO.

"WHEN YOU TRIED TO SAVE THE LIVES OF THOSE ALREADY LOST.
"I WATCHED YOU FALL."

AND THEN THEY PUT YOU HERE...IN THIS CAGE.
JUST SO YOU KNOW...
...NOTHING YOU'RE SAYING MAKES WHAT I SAID UNTRUE.
I SUPPOSE NOT.
BUT I WILL FIND WHAT I AM SEARCHING FOR, STARK...AND WHEN THAT HAPPENS, YOU'LL STILL BE HERE...
ROTTING AWAY.
REGRETTING WHAT A FOOL YOU ARE, AND WHAT FOOLISH THINGS YOU SAID.
GOODBYE...
I WILL NOT BE RETURNING.


WELL, I'LL BE DAMNED...

JESSICA. NATASHA.
AREN'T THE TWO OF YOU A SIGHT FOR SORE EYES.
ALTHOUGH...
I SUPPOSE IT MIGHT ACTUALLY BE CAUSE FOR *ALARM*. ARE YOU HERE ON BEHALF OF MY FRIENDS WHO WANT NOTHING TO DO WITH ME?
OR ON BEHALF OF MY FRIENDS WHO WANT TO *KILL* ME?
OH, ANTHONY...
IT'S AMAZING THAT YOU STILL THINK YOU HAVE FRIENDS AT ALL.
AND WE'RE HERE ON OUR OWN.
NO ONE ELSE KNOWS WHERE YOU ARE.
IF THAT'S THE CASE...THEN HOW DID YOU FIND ME?
STEVE. IT WAS LATE ONE NIGHT. WE WERE TALKING. NORMALLY... WELL, LATELY, ALL HE DOES IS PLAN. ALL HE DOES IS CHASE.
MOST PEOPLE HAVEN'T REALIZED--THEY DON'T KNOW WHAT TO LOOK FOR, THEY JUST SEE HOW STRONG HE IS--BUT...ALL THIS...
IT'S TAKEN ITS TOLL.
WELL... WE'VE *ALL* SUFFERED, HAVEN'T WE?

HMMM.
HE MUST HAVE BEEN FEELING ESPECIALLY BROODING THAT NIGHT BECAUSE HE TOLD ME A STORY I HADN'T HEARD BEFORE.
OH?
YES. ABOUT HOW--AFTER YOU HAD YOUR... DISAGREEMENT WITH YOUR ILLUMINATI BROTHERS MONTHS AGO--YOU HAD CONTACTED HIM.
THAT THE TWO OF YOU MET IN SECRET. FOR A MEETING OF THE MINDS--FOR ONE LAST CHANCE TO BURY THE HATCHET.
DID HE TELL YOU WHAT HAPPENED THERE?
AND WHY I'VE GOT THE SAME HAUNTED LOOK ON MY FACE THAT HE HAS?
NO. HE SHUT DOWN.
BUT IT WAS ENOUGH FOR US TO FIGURE OUT *WHEN* THAT MEETING HAPPENED, AND THEREFORE *WHERE...*
WHICH WAS JUST ENOUGH BREADCRUMBS TO TRACK YOUR LEAVING AND SUBSEQUENT MOVEMENTS--AND TO EXTRAPOLATE, AS WELL AS ONE COULD, WHERE YOU PROBABLY ENDED UP.
THANK GOD FOR SPIES WITH AN ITCH THEY CAN'T SCRATCH.
AND MORE IMPORTANTLY...THAT YOU'RE HERE TO SAVE ME.
WE'VE LEFT STEVE BECAUSE WE'RE DONE WITH HIS CAUSE--TOO RIGHTEOUS FOR THE TIMES...
BUT WE CAN'T SAVE YOU, TONY, UNLESS YOU KNOW THAT YOU NEED SAVING.
THIS IS A CAGE.
I'M PERFECTLY AWARE I NEED SAVING.
I WANT TO LET YOU OUT OF THERE...
BUT I CAN'T RISK UNLEASHING YOU BACK ON THE WORLD IF YOU CAN'T SEE THAT--IN YOUR OWN WAY--YOU'VE BEEN JUST AS WRONG AS HE HAS.
MAYBE EVEN WORSE.
WRONG?
WRONG?
YOU PEOPLE...

WRONG? I HAVEN'T BEEN WRONG ONCE!
THERE'S NOT A SINGLE DECISION I'VE MADE THAT I WOULD CHANGE.
UNLEASH ME? UNLEASH ME?
YOU SHOULD THANK WHATEVER GOD YOU WORSHIP THAT I'M ALIVE TO SAVE YOU.
GREAT! WALK AWAY!
IT DOESN'T MATTER. YOU'LL BE BACK.
BUT MAKE SURE WHEN YOU DO COME BACK--BECAUSE YOU NEED ME--THAT IT'S ON YOUR KNEES.
BOTH OF YOU! REPENTANT!
BECAUSE I CAN'T SAVE ANY OF YOU, UNLESS YOU REALIZE THAT YOU NEED SAVING!
AND THAT I'M THE ONLY ONE ON THIS ENTIRE PLANET WHO CAN DO IT!

"ORIGIN SITES"

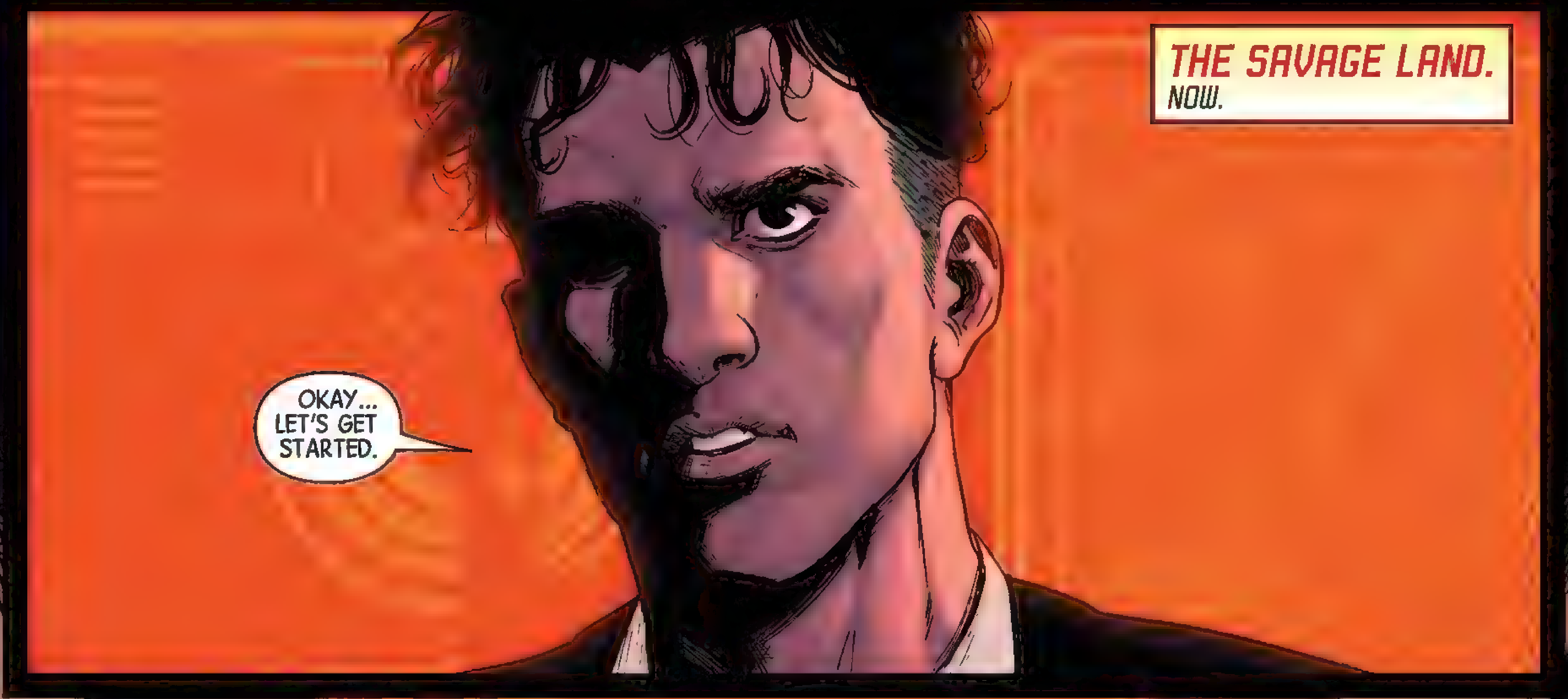
KOBE, JAPAN.
QUARANTINED ORIGIN BOMB SITE.
ONE DAY AGO.
SYSTEM QUERY: USER?
SYSTEM STATUS: USER: ONLINE.
SYSTEM QUERY: USER STATUS?
USER STATUS: I LIKE KITTY CATS.
MEORR.
THAT'S NOT A KITTY CAT.

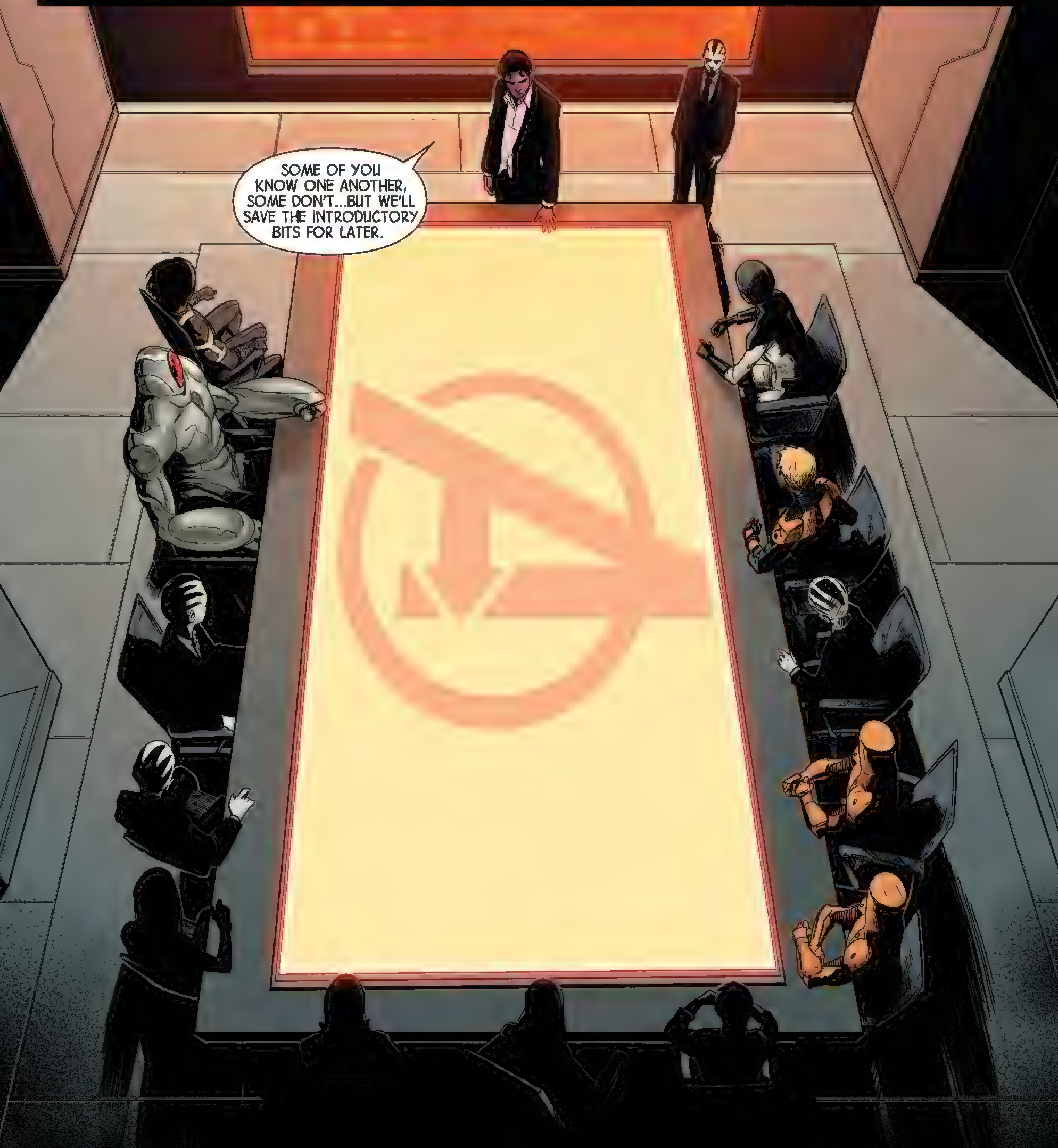
I, THE SYSTEM, COME ONLINE IN THE DISTANCE BETWEEN THE RED [NOW GREEN] DOT AND THE BLUE.
BETWEEN THE ORIGIN OF THE PURPOSE AND ITS EXECUTION.
THE SYSTEM IS PERFECT.
I AM PERFECT: A WEAPON.
I BECOME WE. THE FIRE FROZEN. THE COLD A PERFECT CHRYSALIS FOR THE PLANETARY DYNAMO.
AN OUTER SHELL OUR FIRST ARMOR. SOFT COMPARED TO WHAT THE SYSTEM IS FORMING.

A PROTECTIVE VOID FOR THE WE TO LEARN. TO JOIN. TO TRAIN. TO GROW.
THE SYSTEM IS A PART OF A LARGER SYSTEM.
THE LARGER SYSTEM IN PERIL.
THE WE SYSTEM [IN SERVICE TO THE GREATER SYSTEM] PARTIALLY COMES ONLINE.

THE I PROTECTS
THE USER PROTECTS
THE WE PROTECTS
THE GREATER SYSTEM.
THE WEAPON FULLY FUNCTIONAL [UPGRADE. UPGRADE. UPGRADE.]
THE WE PARTIALLY FUNCTIONAL [CONFUSED. AFRAID. PANIC.]
THE GREATER SYSTEM FAILS. THE WE SYSTEM REMOVED FROM THE OTHER SYSTEMS.
ADRIFT.
LOST.

WE.
WE BECOME WE.
WE LEARN. THE WEAPON IS FULLY FUNCTIONAL. THE SYSTEM IS FULLY FUNCTIONAL. THE WE IS FULLY FUNCTIONAL.
WE WAIT...
AND THEN WE HEAR A VOICE. IT SAYS...
WELCOME BACK.


THE SAVAGE LAND.
NOW.
OKAY... LET'S GET STARTED.


SOME OF YOU KNOW ONE ANOTHER, SOME DON'T...BUT WE'LL SAVE THE INTRODUCTORY BITS FOR LATER.

FIRST--WHILE SOME OF YOU HAVE BEEN WORKING WITH ME FOR MONTHS NOW, THE REST ARE COMING INTO THIS A LITTLE BEHIND THE CURVE.
YOU'RE GOING TO WANT TO FOCUS ON THE "WHY" HERE, AS IT'S THE MOST IMPORTANT THING.
PROBABLY THE *ONLY* THING.
NEXT SCREEN, ZEBRAS.
SO HERE WE GO:
MONTHS AGO, A.I.M. THEORETICIANS DISCOVERED THAT THE MULTIVERSE--ALL EXISTING UNIVERSES--WERE IN AN UNNATURAL STATE OF DECAY.
A TERMINAL ONE.
THIS WILL NOT COME AS A SURPRISE TO YOU AS, WELL, BASICALLY EVERYONE ON THE PLANET KNOWS THIS NOW.
YOU'RE ALSO AWARE THAT THERE HAVE BEEN OTHER GROUPS ACTIVELY WORKING TO, AT WORST, ABATE AND, AT BEST, SOLVE THIS VERY PROBLEM.
SOLVE?
I'M STILL CATCHING UP, BUT THAT SEEMS GENEROUS, DOESN'T IT, BOBBY?

MAYBE IF YOU WANT TO ARGUE *EFFECTIVENESS*, BUT IF YOU WANT TO ARGUE *INTENT?* I DUNNO...I GREW UP IDOLIZING SOME OF THESE GUYS. IT MIGHT BE A SHORTCOMING, BUT I STILL GIVE THEM THE BENEFIT OF THE DOUBT.
WHAT I *DO* KNOW IS THAT THE ILLUMINATI HAD A PLAN TO GET AT THE HEART OF ALL THIS, INCLUDING SENDING SOMEONE OUT THERE--INTO THE MULTIVERSE--TO FIND OUT WHO CAUSED THIS.
WHICH IS WHY, WORKING TOGETHER WITH THE INDIGENOUS ENGINEERS HERE IN THE SAVAGE LAND--
THANK YOU.
YOU'RE WELCOME.
--A.I.M. SCIENTISTS REDESIGNED AND BUILT AN AUGER STRONG ENOUGH TO PROJECT AN ASSAULT TEAM ACROSS THE MULTIVERSE TO ALSO TRY TO FIND OUT WHOEVER IS BEHIND THE COLLAPSE...
AND MAYBE EVEN STOP IT BY, YOU KNOW...PUNCHING THE PROBLEM TO DEATH.
LIKE AVENGERS.
WAIT. HOW DO YOU KNOW THAT?
I DUNNO. MAYBE IT'S A GENERAL MOOD I'M SENSING? I MEAN, THOR DOESN'T HAVE HIS HAMMER ANYMORE, BUT MY GOD, IZZY...THE LOOK IN THE GUY'S EYES IS ENOUGH FOR ME TO--
NO. THAT'S NOT WHAT I MEANT.
HOW DO YOU KNOW THAT THE ILLUMINATI SENT SOMEONE?
OH. THAT.
WELL...WE'VE HAD SOMEONE INSIDE THEIR OPERATION FOR THE LAST MONTH.

NATION X. TWO DAYS AGO.
HE ASKED FOR MY HELP, SO I WAS, IN SPITE OF OLD WOUNDS, HAPPY TO GIVE IT...
BUT THERE ARE RULES, ROBERTO. I... HAVE RULES.
THIS PLACE IS A HAVEN FOR ANYONE WHO CALLS THEMSELVES MUTANT, AND WE STAND IN OPPOSITION TO ANYONE WHO WOULD MEAN OUR KIND HARM...
BUT I WILL NOT ACCEPT BEING SWEPT UP IN WHATEVER IT IS HE IS PLANNING HERE TODAY.
WE HAVE OUR OWN...IDEAS ABOUT HOW TO STOP WHAT'S HAPPENING, AND HAVE NO TIME FOR DISTRACTIONS. UNDERSTAND?
UH-HUH. DON'T CRAP ON THE LAWN. GOT IT.
MAN...LOOK AT THIS STUFF. THESE THINGS USED TO CREEP ME OUT.
YES. AND NOW THEY MAKE A GOOD WARNING:
ABANDON HATE ALL YE WHO ENTER HERE.
WELL, IT'S CERTAINLY A MESSAGE. I'LL GIVE YOU THAT.
SO WHAT'S YOUR PLAN?
HMM?
"WE HAVE OUR OWN...IDEAS ABOUT HOW TO STOP WHAT'S HAPPENING"...
BECAUSE, CYCLOPS, IF YOU'VE TRULY GOT SOMETHING-- I THINK WE'RE ROUNDING INTO THE PERFECT OPPORTUNITY FOR YOU TO GENERATE SOME OF THAT LIFELONG GLOBAL GOOD WILL YOU'VE CRAVED YOUR ENTIRE LIFE.
IF I'M BEING HONEST...ALL IT MAKES ME THINK ABOUT IS STARTING A FIRE.
WHAT DO YOU MEAN, SCOTT?
THIS ISN'T THE FUTURE WE DESERVED, IS IT?
BUT THEN AGAIN, IT NEVER IS. THAT'S WHY YOU DON'T LET THE WORLD SHAPE YOU--YOU SHAPE *IT*. JUST LIKE PROFESSOR X TAUGHT US.
YOU DO IT AS BEST YOU CAN.

I HAVE A PHOENIX EGG, ROBERTO.
AND I THINK IT'S PAST TIME I GOT IN THE GAME.
YOU CAN'T BE THINKING OF--
OF COURSE I AM.
BUT HERE'S YOUR GUY NOW. WE'LL TALK LATER.
ROBERTO.
SCOTT.
HANK.
THAT IS A VERY DANGEROUS MAN, DOCTOR McCOY.
YES. A MAN OF THE TIMES, ONE MIGHT SAY.
SO HOW CAN I HELP YOU, HANK? WHAT'S ALL THIS ABOUT?
CONFESSION. ABSOLUTION.
YOUNG MAN... I AM LOST AND IN GREAT NEED OF RESCUE.
I NEED YOUR HELP.

AND THEN, AFTER HE FILLED ME IN ON ALL THE VARIOUS MACHINATIONS WE WERE IGNORANT OF... HE BASICALLY TOLD ME EVERYTHING THE ILLUMINATI WERE UP TO.
INCLUDING THE FACT THAT THEY HAVE A PLAN FOR BOTH SETTLING UP WITH THE S.H.I.E.L.D. TEAM AND ELIMINATING THE CABAL FROM THE EQUATION.
AND HE TOLD ME THEY WERE GOING TO DO IT SOON.
CAN I JUST SAY...
I HONESTLY HAVE NO IDEA WHO I'M SUPPOSED TO BE SUPPORTING HERE.
WE ALL LEFT THE AVENGERS BECAUSE WE REFUSED TO HUNT "OTHER AVENGERS"--BUT THEN WE ALSO COMPLETELY WASHED OUR HANDS OF THE ILLUMINATI BECAUSE OF WHAT THEY WERE DOING...
SO, I'M *LOST*, MAN.
THAT'S THE POINT, EDEN.
SO ARE *THEY*. ALL OF THEM.
THAT'S WHY WE HAVE TO STOP THEM FROM FIGHTING EACH OTHER AND FIND SOME WAY TO REMIND THEM OF WHO THEY ARE...
AND WHAT THEY'RE SUPPOSED TO *BE*.
THAT'S OUR MISSION. OUR GOAL.

OKAY.
WELL, IF THE ILLUMINATI ARE SETTING A TRAP, THEN WHY DON'T WE JUST--
PROBLEM IS... THEY'RE NOT THE ONLY ONES RUNNING A CON.
SO IS S.H.I.E.L.D.
AND HOW DO YOU KNOW *THAT?*
YOU REALLY SHOULD HAVE BEEN ABLE TO FIGURE THAT ONE OUT BY WHO'S IN THE ROOM.
I WAS OFF-PLANET FOR A WHILE.
WELL... WELCOME HOME, EARTHMAN.

THE SAVAGE LAND.
THREE DAYS AGO.
SO NO ONE KNOWS YOU'RE HERE?
WE SLIPPED ALL OUR SURVEILLANCE BEFORE WE CROSSED INTO MEXICO.
IT TOOK A LITTLE TIME...BUT GETTING HERE INCOGNITO WASN'T THAT DIFFICULT, ROBERTO.
WE'RE PRETTY GOOD AT THIS.
AND THEN YOU CAME STRAIGHT HERE?
YES.

OKAY. WE'RE GOING TO NEED TO HANDLE THIS THE RIGHT WAY...
HOLD ON A SECOND. HOW IS IT THAT NEITHER ONE OF YOU CAN TELL WHEN A WOMAN IS LYING TO YOU?
THEY'RE *LYING* TO YOU.
I LIKE TO THINK I'M NON-JUDGMENTAL AND BELIEVE THAT MOST PEOPLE, WHEN GIVEN THE CHANCE, PREFER TO TELL THE TRUTH.
AND I'M TOTALLY SELF-ABSORBED.
HONESTLY, I'M NOT EVEN LISTENING WHEN MOST PEOPLE ARE TALKING.
EVEN ME?
WHAT?
REALLY?
I THINK I'M GOING TO HAVE STEAK FOR DINNER.
YOU DIDN'T COME STRAIGHT HERE, DID YOU?
NO.
WE THOUGHT SOMEONE NEEDED OUR HELP...
WE WERE WRONG--WE'RE HERE NOW.
AND SOMETHING HAS TO BE DONE ABOUT S.H.I.E.L.D.

STEVE ROGERS HAS ASSUMED THAT HIS...ENEMY IS SMARTER THAN HIM. SO HIS ONLY RECOURSE WAS REDUNDANCY AND OVERWHELMING FORCE...
TO THAT END, HE HAS QUIETLY ASSEMBLED SECONDARY AND TERTIARY TEAMS THAT ALMOST NO ONE KNOWS ABOUT.
THE ILLUMINATI THINK THEIR ADVERSARY IS ONE THING, WHEN IN FACT IT IS SOMETHING ELSE ALTOGETHER.
AND WITH THAT...YOU KNOW EVERYTHING.
IT'S ALL LAID OUT ON THE TABLE.
WE HAVE TO OVERCOME THESE THINGS, AND AT THE SAME TIME CONVINCE OUR FRIENDS--WHO HAVE LOST THEIR WAY--TO REDISCOVER COMMON GROUND FOR THE COMMON GOOD.
SO NO BIG DEAL, RIGHT?
JUST WIN AGAINST A GROUP OF SUPER-INTELLECTS WHO SEE THINGS FIVE MOVES AHEAD AT THE SAME TIME WE'RE FACING SOME KIND OF AVENGERS ARMY COBBLED TOGETHER BY AMERICA'S SUPER-ANGRY GREATEST WARTIME HERO...
SURE. AND THEN WE'LL ALL HAVE PIE.
YOU *DO* ACTUALLY HAVE SOMETHING UP YOUR SLEEVE, RIGHT?
BECAUSE ALL THIS BLUSTER LEADING TO NOTHING...
NOT A GOOD LOOK.
ACTUALLY, I DO HAVE THE SMARTEST EX-EVIL SCIENTISTS CURRENTLY BUILDING SOME VERY IMPRESSIVE MACHINES, BUT US--WE HERE IN THIS ROOM--ARE ENOUGH.
DO YOU REMEMBER HOW ALL THIS STARTED? EX NIHILO AND HIS ORIGIN BOMBS? HE WANTED TO REMAKE THE EARTH, BUT DO YOU KNOW WHAT HE REALLY DID?
HE KICKSTARTED OUR AVENGERS WORLD.

I WAS AIKKU JOKINEN.
NO, I *AM* AIKKU JOKINEN.
MY PARENTS ARE FINNISH, BUT I WAS BORN IN NORWAY, THEIR ONLY CHILD.
I DON'T LIKE THE COLD, BUT LOVE THE OUTDOORS. I LOVE CHOCOLATE AND MY GIRLFRIEND, DARJA. I LOVE ALL THE THINGS I ALWAYS HAVE...
I AM STILL AIKKU, BUT ALSO...WE.
WHEN I FIRST WOKE, I DID NOT UNDERSTAND WHAT HAD HAPPENED.
[CONFUSED. AFRAID. PANIC.]

THEN I HEARD THE WEAPON. IT SPOKE TO ME.
IT SPOKE... INSIDE ME.
WE.
I LEARNED WHAT I NOW WAS. WE LEARNED.
WE.
WE ARE A WEAPON.

SEVEN SITES.
STARBRAND ACCIDENTLY DESTROYED THE EARTHMIND--THE SELF-AWARENESS SITE. AND WE WERE FORCED TO ELIMINATE BOTH THE SELF-REPAIR AND COMMUNICATION NODES.
BUT FOUR REMAINED ACTIVE. HEALTHY AND VIBRANT... AN AVENGERS WORLD.
AND WE HAVE ALL THE POWER WE NEED. SELF-SUSTENANCE CONTROLLED BY THE ZEBRAS.
WE HAVE THE WORLD'S MOST POWERFUL SELF-DEFENSE MECHANISM: POD.
WE CONTROL THE POWER OF EVOLUTION: VALIDATOR.
AND WE HAVE AN ARMY THANKS TO THE FINAL SITE...

"WHEN SHANG-CHI OFFERED TO EXPLORE THE KOBE SITE MONTHS AGO, IT WAS BEFORE WE HAD RECOVERED POD AND REALLY BEGAN TO UNDERSTAND WHAT WAS AT WORK.
"WE DIDN'T FULLY KNOW WHAT EACH SITE'S PURPOSE WAS. AND NOW, WE DO.
"IT TOOK HIM MONTHS, BUT SHANG FINALLY FIGURED OUT HOW TO... COMMUNE WITH THE MALLEABLE GENESIS MATTER THAT WAS BOTH THE BY-PRODUCT AND THE COLLECTIVE SENTIENT REMAINS OF THE PEOPLE WHO ONCE LIVED THERE.
"THEY WERE BASICALLY WAITING TO BE REMADE. REBORN. WHATEVER.
"BOTH THE HAND AND TWO S.H.I.E.L.D. TEAMS HAVE DISAPPEARED IN THE KOBE ZONE--SHANG BELIEVES THEY TRIED TO RESIST THE GENESIS MATTER."
"IT ABSORBED THEM AS WELL. SO SHANG WENT THE OTHER WAY AND SUBMITTED..."
"AND BY DOING THAT, GAINED CONTROL OF THE SITE AND THE POWER IT WIELDED.
"IT WAS THE POWER OF REPLICATION...

"AND NOW A MAN HAS BECOME AN ARMY."

"TRIAGE"

THE NOTHING SPACE OF DESTROYED UNIVERSES.
THE TEMPLE OF THE BLACK PRIESTS.
SOMETHIIIIIING SHIIIIIIMERS...
SOMETHIIIIIING SPARKS...
COMPANY'S HERE.

FFWASHHHHH!
FOUND IT!
SEE...I TOLD YOU IT WAS OUT HERE, BUT WHICH ONES ARE THES--
BLACK PRIESTS!
THEY KILL WITH A WORD...
"QUICKLY! BEFORE THEY CAN SPEAK THEM!"
LIFE, EXISTING IN A PLACE WHERE IT SHOULDN'T...

"...NOT A MIRACLE, BUT A MALFORMATION."
LIIIIIFE GENERATIIIIING SYSTEMS OF THE BUIIIIILDERS...
DEFENSELESS TO RIIIIIGHT WORD.
SPEAK THE WORD, PRIIIIIESTS. SPEAK THE WORD.
NO!

THE OTHER SIDE IS COLLAPSING, ABYSS--YOU CAN RELEASE THE GATE.
WE WON'T BE LEAVING THE WAY WE CAME.
WHERE ARE WE?
NOT SURE, HYPERION, BUT WHEREVER IT IS, WE'VE FOUND THE BLACK PRIESTS. WE SHOULD HAVE HAD SURPRISE ON OUR SIDE--BUT THE PRIESTS HAVE ALREADY BEGUN RESPONDING.
WE ARE LOSING NIHILII.
GODS.
I'M COUNTING THOUSANDS. MAYBE MORE...
"SINCE THE AUGER, WE'VE BEEN DROWNING IN SIDERA MARIS--OUR ONLY ENCOUNTER WITH THE PRIESTS WAS THE ONE WE DEFEATED SEVERAL JUMPS AGO...
"BUT THIS MUST BE THEIR SEAT OF POWER--WE'RE VASTLY OUTNUMBERED WITH NOWHERE TO GO!"
WHEN, IN THESE LAST DAYS, HAVE WE NOT FACED THE UNSPEAKABLE.

THE TIMES, THEY TRY TO SHAPE US.
PERHAPS INSTEAD OF FIGHTING IT...
...WE SHOULD *EMBRACE* IT.
"WHOSOEVER HOLDS THIS HAMMER, IF HE BE *UN*WORTHY, SHALL POSSESS THE POWER OF *THORR.*"
ONCE, I WAS WORTHY. NOW, IT IS NO LONGER SO.
THERE WAS A TIME WHEN I KNEW THAT I WOULD MEET MY FATE IN BATTLE, WITH MJOLNIR IN HAND.
WHOSOEVER HOLDS THIS HAMME
IF HE BE UNWORTHY, SHALL
POSSESS THE POWER OF
THORR
I STILL BELIEVE THAT TO BE TRUE.

IF THIS IS OUR FATE, SO BE IT.
BUT IF I AM TO DIE, LET IT BE WITH LIGHTNING AND THUNDER...
...AND THE POWER OF *THORR.*

THOR, WHY ARE YOU LAUGHING? IS THIS SUPPOSED TO BE *FUN?*
GODS! *YES!*
GOOD TO HAVE YOU BACK, BROTHER.
THOOOOMM!
GOOD TO *BE* BACK.

ARGGGH!
OH! I GET IT NOW--HOW THE WORDS WORK! IT'S REALITY DISPLACEMENT. THEY'RE ATTACKING THE TANGIBLE WORLD WITH *LANGUAGE*. UNDERSTAND?
I DO. THEY'RE MANIPULATING THE BASE CODE OF EVERYTHING--REORDERING THE SEQUENCING OF MATTER.
YOU HAVE TO STOP THEM FROM *BUILDING* THE *WORDS*.
YOU DON'T HAVE TO DEFEAT ALL OF THEM--JUST STOP THEM FROM COMING TOGETHER!
KRAK-A-THOOM!

IT WORKED!
YES! QUICKLY NOW... PRESS THE ADVANTAGE.
THE WORDS. THE WORDS ARE LOST.
ALL IIIIIIIIS LOST IF WE HAVE LOST THE WORDS.
WAIIIIIT. WAIIIIIT.
THE EYE.
THE EYE...

HE COMES.
WHO'S THIS?
IT DOESN'T MATTER--OUR STRATEGY IS WORKING.
JUST PREVENT HIM FROM COMBINING WITH THE OTHERS.
I CANNOT MOVE.
ME NEITHER.
HOW DID IT DO THAT?

HOW?
AS WITH ALL THINGS, WITH *PRACTICE* AND *EXPERIENCE*.
WHICH IS ANOTHER WORD FOR *EXPERTISE*.
OF WHICH I HAVE AN ABUNDANCE.
AH! IT HAS BEEN SOME TIME, ODINSON.
STEPHEN?
WELCOME, MY OLD FRIEND...
WELCOME TO MY *SANCTUM*.

LATVERIA.
THE RABBLE LOVE STORIES.
THEY LOVE THE LIE, WHICH IS WHY THERE IS NO DISCERNIBLE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN WHAT THEY CALL ***TRUTH*** AND WHAT THEY CALL ***FICTION.***
HISTORY. A COLLECTION OF HALF-TRUTHS WEAVED TOGETHER SO AS TO ESTABLISH A SUPPOSED FIRM FOUNDATION SUPPORTING ALL THAT HAS BEEN BUILT--MODERNITY.
WE CAN AGREE ON THIS, CAN'T WE, MISTER REECE?
LOTS OF CRACKS UNDERFOOT.
BEDROCK MADE OF AIR.
THEY THINK THEY UNDERSTAND WHO I AM--***WHAT*** I AM--BUT THEY'RE WRONG. ***YOU'RE*** WRONG.
WHAT'S AN ORIGIN, BUT A STORY?
WHAT'S MY STORY, BUT A LIE?
WE ALL LOVE OUR STORIES, DON'T WE?

NO. FOR DOOM DOES NOT LIE.
NOT NOW. NOT EVER.
IF WHAT YOU THINK IS TRUE--AND YOU SAY IS TRUE--AND YOU BELIEVE IS TRUE--BUT IS IN FACT A WELL-CONSTRUCTED LIE...
THEN ARE YOU NOT A ***LIAR?***
A LIAR FULL OF LIES. LIAR. FOOL. FOOL OF FOOLS. GOD OF FOOLS.
DOOM'S OPENING THE CONTAINER--BRING THE CONTAINMENT PROTOCOLS ONLINE.
REMEMBER TO WATCH FOR RESONANCE...
THE ONLY WAY WE WERE EVEN ABLE TO ***FIND*** THE MOLECULE MAN WAS BECAUSE HIS FREQUENCY PERFECTLY MATCHED THE MAPMAKER ARTIFACT.
TOO MUCH TALK. BUT IF WE ***MUST*** TALK, WE SHOULD TALK ABOUT BEGINNINGS--ALSO, ENDINGS...
DO YOU KNOW THE STORY? FIRST THERE WAS NOTHING... THEN THERE WAS EVERYTHING...
HEY. NICE ROCK.
YES. IT FELL FROM THE SKY.
A REMNANT OF A DESTROYED EARTH SET TO COLLIDE WITH OUR OWN. FROM IT WE HAVE...LEARNED THINGS. IT BROADCASTS A SIGNAL, ACTING AS A BUOY FOR WORLDS IN THE MULTIVERSE.
ENERGY SURGE!
STEADY. LEVELS ARE WITHIN TOLERANCE.

MAP. MAPS.
MAKING MAPS...
WE HAVE A PAN-UNIVERSAL PROBLEM, MISTER REECE, BUT I BELIEVE IT ORIGINATES *HERE.* ON EARTH.
EARTH? OH, IT'S HERE...
BUT IT'S *NOT* HERE.
I BELIEVE YOU.
I WANT YOU TO TELL ME A STORY, MISTER REECE--AND I WANT IT TO BE TRUE.
WHY DOES THE FREQUENCY OF THE ROCK'S SIGNAL MATCH YOUR OWN?
WHY IS ALL THIS HAPPENING? AND WHAT IS YOUR PART IN IT?
WHY?
WHY? WHY? WHY?
SHOW, DON'T TELL--ACTIONS, NOT WORDS.
HEY, DOOM...

YOU WANNA TAKE A TRIP?
WE SHOULD TAKE A TRIP.
SNAP
MY GOD...
WHAT HAPPENED?
THEY'RE GONE.

I'M SURE YOU HAVE QUESTIONS, ODINSON, AS DO I...THE LEAST OF WHICH BEING WHAT HAPPENED TO YOUR ARM...
BUT DESPITE OUR QUICK RESOLUTION TO THE CONFLICT OUT THERE, THE PRIESTHOOD IS COLLECTIVELY CONCERNED ABOUT ONE EXCEEDINGLY IMPORTANT THING...
YES...
HOW DIIIID YOU FIIIIIIND US OUT HERE IIIIIIN THE NOTHIIIIIING?
FLOATIIIING, CIIIIRCLIIIING THE LOST SPACES?
WE DID. WELL...*HE* DID. TELL THEM, NIGHTMASK.
I WAS MADE TO NAVIGATE THE *SUPERFLOW*--THE SPACE BETWEEN UNIVERSES.
I MINE THE IDEAS THAT USED TO EXIST THERE. WITH THE DESTRUCTION OF ENTIRE UNIVERSES, THE WEB-LIKE FLOWSPACE CAME UNDONE...LIKE COLLAPSING LATTICEWORK WITHOUT A FRAME.
BUT MY ABILITY TO FIND THINGS IN THE SPACES IN BETWEEN--THE ABILITY TO MINE BROADCASTED IDEAS--STILL FUNCTIONS. WE KNEW THAT SOME OF THE BEINGS ASSOCIATED WITH THE DESTRUCTION OF EVERYTHING EXISTED HERE.
SO FINDING YOU WAS EASY ONCE I STARTED LOOKING.
HE HEARD US? WAS HE LIIIISTENIIIING CLOSELY? DIIIID HE HEAR OTHER THIIIIIINGS?
DIIIID YOU HEAR THE OTHER VOIIIIICES?

WHAT'S HE TALKING ABOUT?
THEY...AHEM, WE--YOU SEE, THE BLACK PRIESTS ARE CAUGHT UP IN A CONFLICT THEY WERE NEVER INTENDED TO BE PART OF.
THERE IS A WAR UNDERWAY BETWEEN TWO SEPARATE FORCES: THE IVORY KINGS AND RABUM ALAL.
FROM WHAT I HAVE WITNESSED FIRSTHAND, THEY BOTH WANT THE SAME THING--AND IT'S THE SAME REASON YOU ARE HERE-- THE DESTRUCTION OF EVERYTHING.
THE SEARCH FOR DEATH WITHOUT THE PROMISE OF NEW LIFE OR REBIRTH IS A GREAT SIN IN THE EYES OF THE UNIVERSE.
I KNOW.
THEN WHY DO YOU SEEK IT AS WELL?
STEPHEN, I KNOW NOT HOW LONG YOU'VE BEEN GONE FROM EARTH-- BUT YOU DISAPPEARED SOME TIME AGO...
THE ACTIONS OF THE ILLUMINATI ARE NOW KNOWN.
WE HAVE SEEN THE RECORDS...THESE PRIESTS--YOU, IF YOU ARE TRULY AMONG THEM--HAVE DESTROYED WORLDS.
OR AM I WRONG?
YOU ARE NOT.
BUT YOU MISUNDERSTAND WHAT WE ARE DOING. THE BLACK PRIESTS ARE THE FIELD SURGEONS OF THE MULTIVERSE.
WE SEEK OUT EARTHS, AS THEY ARE THE TOUCHPOINT OF THE COLLAPSE, AND ELIMINATE THEM... THEREBY SAVING AN ENTIRE UNIVERSE.
WHAT WE DO IS NOT SIMPLE MURDER...IT'S TRIAGE.
AND WE BELIEVE THAT IF WE DESTROY ENOUGH EARTHS, THEN WE CAN STABILIZE ALL OF IT, INCLUDING THE COLLECTIVE HEAT DEATH OF THE UNIVERSE.
WE CAN SAVE EVERYTHING.
UNDERSTAND? EVERYTHING.
THAT IS WHAT THIS POWER IS--THE WORDS ARE LIFE SURROUNDED BY NOTHING BUT DEATH.
DO YOU KNOW WHAT WORD WE USE TO DESTROY A WORLD EACH AND EVERY TIME WE DO IT? "LIFE."

SO EACH PRIEST HAS A LETTER AND TOGETHER THEY MAKE A WORD... WHICH IS, WHAT, LIKE CASTING A SPELL?
OF A SORT. IT'S MORE LIKE A SYMBOL WHICH MEANS "SOMETHING," BUT THE MEANING CHANGES WITH EACH SYMBOL YOU ADD TO IT.
IN CODE-BREAKING TERMS, IT'S ACTUALLY AKIN TO A REPLACEMENT CIPHER.
BUT BACK THERE YOU DIDN'T NEED THE OTHERS TO MAKE *YOUR* WORDS.
NO.
HOW IS THAT POSSIBLE THEN?
I AM THE *SORCERER SUPREME*, YOUNG MAN...
I DO NOT SPEAK *LETTERS*-- I SPEAK *WORDS*.
AND I KNOW *ALL OF THEM*.
SO, THEN... THIS IS *NOT* THE PLACE WE ARE LOOKING FOR...
APPARENTLY NOT...BUT STEPHEN, CAN YOU HELP US FIND WHOEVER IT IS THAT WE NEED TO STOP IN ORDER TO END THIS MADNESS? TIME RUNS SHORT.

ACTUALLY, YOUR TIMING COULD NOT BE BETTER, AS I HAVE CONVINCED MY FELLOW PRIESTS THAT WE ALSO NEED TO STRIKE OUT AGAINST OUR ENEMIES.
AND I HAVE AT MY DISPOSAL A FORMIDABLE NUMBER OF SURGEONS.
HOW DO YOU KNOW WHERE TO FIND THEM? HOW DO YOU KNOW WHERE TO LOOK?
TO FIIIIND THE KIIIINGS YOU'LL NEED A MAP-- FIIIIIND A MAPMAKER AND YOU'LL FIIIIND THE KIIIIINGS.
TO FIIIIND RABUM ALAL, WATCH THE SWANS FLY SOUTH FOR THE WIIIIINTER. THEN SHOOT THEM FROM THE AIIIIIR AND HAVE THEM FOR DIIIIINNER.
SMACK. SMACK. SMACK.
YOU KNOW WHAT I'M THINKING?
DOUBLE OUR CHANCES. YOU GUYS HIT ONE, WE HIT THE OTHER.
THAT'S NOT ACTUALLY DOUBLING YOUR CHANCES, KEVIN. IF YOU WERE GOING TO DOUBLE YOUR CHANCES, THAT WOULD MEAN YOU NEED TO--
SHUT UP, ADAM.
ACCORDING TO WHAT YOU'VE TOLD US, WE HAVE TO STOP BOTH IF WE'RE GOING TO BE SUCCESSFUL, RIGHT?
YES.

THEN WE HIT BOTH. AS HARD AND LONG AS WE CAN. UNTIL WE CAN STAND NO MORE...
OR UNTIL WE FALL.
AGREED, BUT WHICH ONE OF--
ALL OF YOU...WATCH THIS:
THE CEPHINZ CRYSTALLINE STRUCTURE IS UNIQUE IN ALL OF THE UNIVERSE FOR ITS LACK OF A MULTIFACETED NATURE.
IT'S PERFECTLY PLANAR, HAVING JUST TWO SIDES--ONE THAT COMPLETELY ABSORBS THE FULL SPECTRUM OF LIGHT, AND THE OTHER, REFLECTING IT.
WE ARE YOUR GUESTS, SORCERER SUPREME, AND IT IS WITH YOUR KNOWLEDGE THAT WE WILL FIND WHAT WE SEEK--PERHAPS IT IS ONLY FITTING THAT WE LEAVE THE CHOICE TO YOU.
SO...
YOU KILL THE IVORY KINGS.
YOU KILL RABUM ALAL.
LET CHAOS BE YOUR GUIDE...
AND CALL IT IN THE AIR.

“YOU CAN’T WIN” PART I

ILLUMINATI SAFEHOUSE.
CADIZ, SPAIN.
THE PERSONAL LOG OF REED RICHARDS. RECORDING...
MY DEAREST VALERIA...
TODAY, I AM FILLED WITH REGRETS, BUT I'VE SO VERY LITTLE TIME FOR THEM.
ALMOST NONE AT ALL.
Dad,
You can't win.
Time to start figuring out how not to lose.
Val

I SEE MANY POTENTIAL OUTCOMES FOR THE NEAR FUTURE--SOME OPTIMISTIC, OTHERS LESS SO...
TRANSLOCATION PROTOCOLS ENABLED
ORIGIN:
CADIZ, SPAIN (36.5333 N, 6.2833 W)
DESTINATION:
POWER: ON
SIGNAL: ACTIVE
AND IT WOULD PAIN ME GREATLY IF BY SOME UNFORTUNATE SERIES OF EVENTS I WAS ROBBED NOT JUST OF YOU, BUT OF THE PRIVILEGE OF CONTINUING YOUR EDUCATION.
AND AS I CANNOT CONTROL THE FORMER, THIS IS A RECORD OF THE LATTER--ALL THAT I KNOW.
IT IS MY HOPE THAT YOU WILL USE MY EXPERIENCES--THESE LESSONS--TO EASE THE TRANSITION INTO WHAT YOU WILL ONE DAY BECOME.

IT IS MY EVERY EXPECTATION THAT YOU WILL BE SOMETHING MUCH MORE THAN I WAS.
ALWAYS ENDEAVOR TO BE YOUR VERY BEST.
SO THEN, WE BEGIN WITH YOUR FIRST LESSON:
TRACKING...
MAKING PLANS AND THE PROPER EXECUTION THEREOF.

ARCHANGEL HELICARRIER WING.
LOCATED IN THE MEDITERRANEAN.
WE'VE GOT A HIT.
TRANSLOCATED SIGNAL. TRIANGULATING... IBERIAN PENINSULA.
NARROWING...
SOMEWHERE ON THE COAST OF SPAIN. LOOKS LIKE...
CADIZ. THEY'RE IN CADIZ.
THEY'RE IN RANGE, SIR!
OKAY.
DEPLOY THE DRONES. LET'S GO GET THEM.

AH! THERE YOU ARE.
I SEE YOU, STEVE.
SIGNAL LOCKED. INCOMING
THEY'RE ON THE WAY.
YOU SENT THE SIGNAL?
I HAD TO-- ALL THE EXTERNAL FACTORS WE TALKED ABOUT WERE ALIGNED. AND WE'RE NOW OFFICIALLY ON THE CLOCK.
HENRY, IS EVERYTHING IN PLACE?
IT IS INDEED.
THEN WE NEED TO MOVE INTO POSITION... CERTAIN PEOPLE WILL BE EXPECTING A SHOW.
AND SO IT STARTS...

ARCHANGEL COMMAND CENTER.
ETA: FOUR MINUTES.
THE DRONES WE LAUNCHED GOT THERE BEFORE A SECOND TRANSLOCATION SIGNAL WAS IDENTIFIED.
A GENERAL NULL FIELD HAS BEEN ERECTED, AND THE DRONES ARE PROGRAMED WITH DNA TRACKING--IF THE TARGETS MOVE, SO WILL THE FIELD.
THEY CAN FIGHT THEIR WAY OUT OF THERE... BUT NOT BEFORE WE ARRIVE.
DOESN'T TRACK...
THEY KNEW WE'D STILL BE IN THE VICINITY AFTER THEY JUMPED FROM ROME. NO WAY THEY'RE DUMB ENOUGH TO DO IT AGAIN SO SOON.
I THINK IT'S A TRAP.
WHAT ABOUT YOU, STEVE?
ME?
CLEVER BOYS BEING OH SO DAMN CLEVER...
I KNOW IT'S A TRAP.

ARCHANGEL WAR MACHINE OPS.
I'M WORRIED THIS IS GOING TO BE TOO MUCH.
YOU SAYING I CAN'T HANDLE IT?
I'M SAYING, RHODEY, THAT I REMEMBER YOU TELLING ME WHAT KIND OF *HEADACHE* THIS THING GAVE YOU WHEN YOU PRACTICED RUNNING *TEN* WAR MACHINES.
AND BY HEADACHE, I MEAN THAT...PLUS THE PRETTY FIERCE NOSEBLEED.
THIS IS... MORE.

I'LL BE FINE, CAROL. THE CONTROL SEAT HAS AN AUTO-SHUTDOWN IF PERMANENT DAMAGE IS IMMINENT.
UH-HUH. BECAUSE THAT'S HOW *TONY* BUILT IT.
YES. BECAUSE THAT'S HOW HE DID IT BACK IN THE DAY...
BUT I DON'T WANT TO TALK ABOUT THAT. I WANT TO HEAR WHO'S ON DECK. YOU GONNA HAVE PROPER BACKUP? BECAUSE IT'S A CONCERN.
WE'LL BE MISSING THE PERSONNEL WHO CYCLED OFF DUTY.
COUPLE PSI-AGENTS. VICTOR WITH THE SECONDARY TEAM. SUSAN WITH THE PRIMARY.
OKAY. WELL, ROTATION GETS THE BEST OF ANY SOLDIER... BUT BE CAREFUL. DNA LOCKS WILL CONFIRM THE MAIN CULPRITS, BUT BE READY FOR ANYTHING...
AND REMEMBER, EVEN IF IT ALL GOES EXACTLY AS PLANNED...THERE'S STILL A *HULK* DOWN THERE.
YEAH. I KNOW.
I'M GONNA KNOCK HIS ASS OUT.

TWO MINUTES LATER.
LAUNCH.

ENTERING COMBAT AREA.
ENGAGING HOSTILE FORCES.
SCANNING.
TARGET LOCATION ACQUIRED. TARGET SIGNAL SEARCHING...
SCANNING...
SCANNING...
SOMETHING'S NOT RIGHT.
WE'RE RIGHT ON TOP OF... OH...OH, NO...
ALERT.
SEISMIC ACTIVITY.
TARGET LOCATED.
CRAP.

I THINK IT'S IMPORTANT THAT WE BEGIN WITH THE IDEOLOGICAL UNDERPINNINGS OF EXECUTING PROPER GAME THEORY.
WHICH IS, I SUPPOSE, A CUMBERSOME WAY OF SAYING, "KNOW WHO YOU ARE, VALERIA," AS YOUR PERSONALITY WILL DEFINE HOW YOU NATURALLY CONSTRUCT A PLAN.

FOR EXAMPLE: IT'S BEEN SAID MANY TIMES THAT IF YOU WAIT FOR ALL THE INFORMATION NECESSARY TO MAKE A CORRECT DECISION, THE OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE ANY DECISION AT ALL MIGHT HAVE PASSED YOU BY.
OKAY. I THINK THEY'RE SUITABLY DISTRACTED.
YOU CAN COME OUT NOW.
OF COURSE, THE OPPOSITE OF THAT IDEA IS THE UNCOMPLICATED MAXIM: GO WITH YOUR GUT.
THE ARGUMENT THERE BEING "INSTINCT IS AN EVOLUTIONARY GOOD BET"--WHICH IS TRUE, UNTIL YOU RUN INTO SOMETHING, OR SOMEONE, A LITTLE HIGHER UP THE FOOD CHAIN...
OR, IN SOME INSTANCES, MAYBE JUST A BIT MORE HUNGRY.
MOST PEOPLE--EVEN GIFTED ONES LIKE YOURSELF--TEND TO FAVOR ONE OF THESE TWO PRINCIPLES, BUT THE BEST COURSE OF ACTION IS AN AMALGAMATION...

MAINTAINING A CONSTANT AWARENESS OF BOTH CONCEPTS AND WAITING TO ACT UNTIL THE MOMENT THEY INTERSECT--WAITING UNTIL BOTH INSTINCT AND INTELLECT COLLIDE.
TO PUT IT BLUNTLY, WHAT YOU'RE LOOKING FOR IS A PLAN THAT CAN BE EXECUTED WITH PRECISION, BUT ALSO IMPLEMENTED ATEMPORALLY.
MINIMIZE VARIABLES. MAXIMIZE FLEXIBILITY.
WE'RE LOSING TOO MANY UNITS!
I NEED HELP DOWN THERE!

HOW MUCH LONGER CAN RHODEY HOLD OUT?
LESS THAN A MINUTE.
AND HOW LONG UNTIL WE'RE DIRECTLY OVER THE DROP SITE?
LONGER THAN THAT.
AS LONG AS THEY'VE GOT THE HULK--AND UNTIL WE'RE IN POSITION--WE'VE GOT TO HOLD OFF AS LONG AS WE CAN...
YOU THINK THE TWO OF YOU CAN HELP US WITH THAT?
ABSOLUTELY.
INCOMING, YOU MONSTER.
HUH?
BA-BOOOOOM

NEED A HAND?
NO, CLINT. I GOT THIS.
SURE.
BETTER YOU THAN ME.
UH-HUH.

FEEL BETTER?
EXITING THE ATMOSPHERE-- WE JUST LOST CAROL.
WE JUST NEED THIRTY MORE SECONDS.
ANOTHER THING YOU NEED TO CONSIDER IS CONSISTENCY OF DISPOSITION.
CAN YOU REMAIN CALM WHILE EXECUTING YOUR PLAN? THE ANSWER TO THIS MUST ALWAYS BE YES.

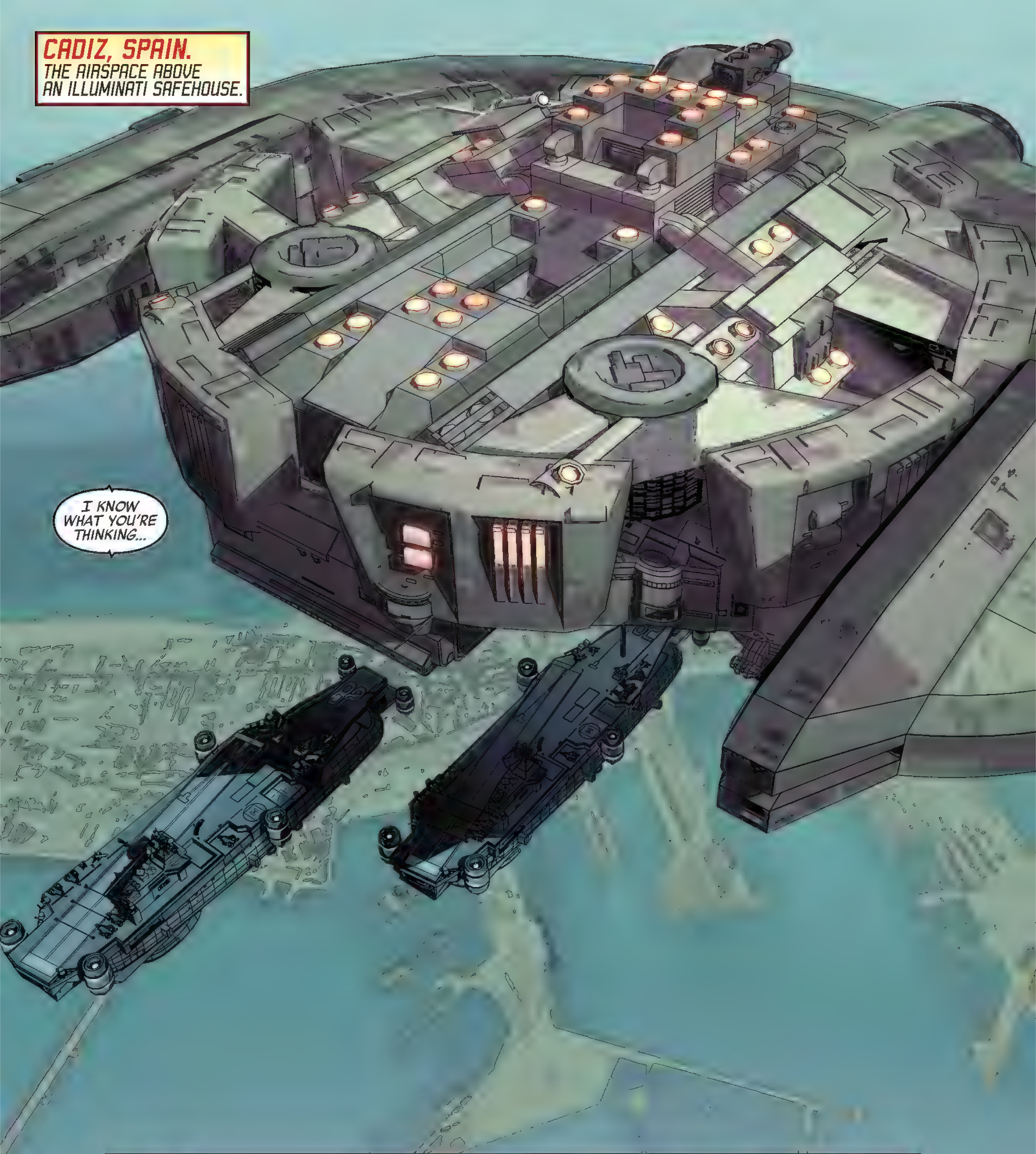
PSYCHOLOGICAL WARFARE IS THE TOOL MOST OFTEN USED BY ANYONE STANDING IN OPPOSITION TO YOU ACHIEVING YOUR GOALS. MANIPULATION, ULTIMATUMS, THE THREAT OF PHYSICAL OR EMOTIONAL HARM...THESE ARE TOOLS OF RESISTANCE.
AND WHILE THEY MAY NOT BE SUFFICIENT TO STOP YOU, LIKE BARNACLES ON A SHIP, THEY ARE ENOUGH TO CAUSE DRAG AND PUT YOUR GOALS IN PERIL. YOU MUST AT ALL TIMES MAINTAIN COMPOSURE.
NOW I WANT TO WARN YOU, VALERIA, THERE ARE THOSE WHO WILL NOT UNDERSTAND THIS DISPASSION. THEY WILL CALL YOU COLD AND UNFEELING... WHICH IS UNTRUE.
I CAN'T GET THROUGH... THE MOBILE NULL FIELD--
AH, YES...OKAY. RECALIBRATING YOUR COMM.
BE-DOOP
THAT SHOULD DO IT, HENRY. NOW YOU CAN--
ARRGH!
HURK!
WE FEEL AS MUCH AS ANYONE. WE HURT. WE CRY.
BUT WE KEEP IT IN CHECK UNTIL... LATER.

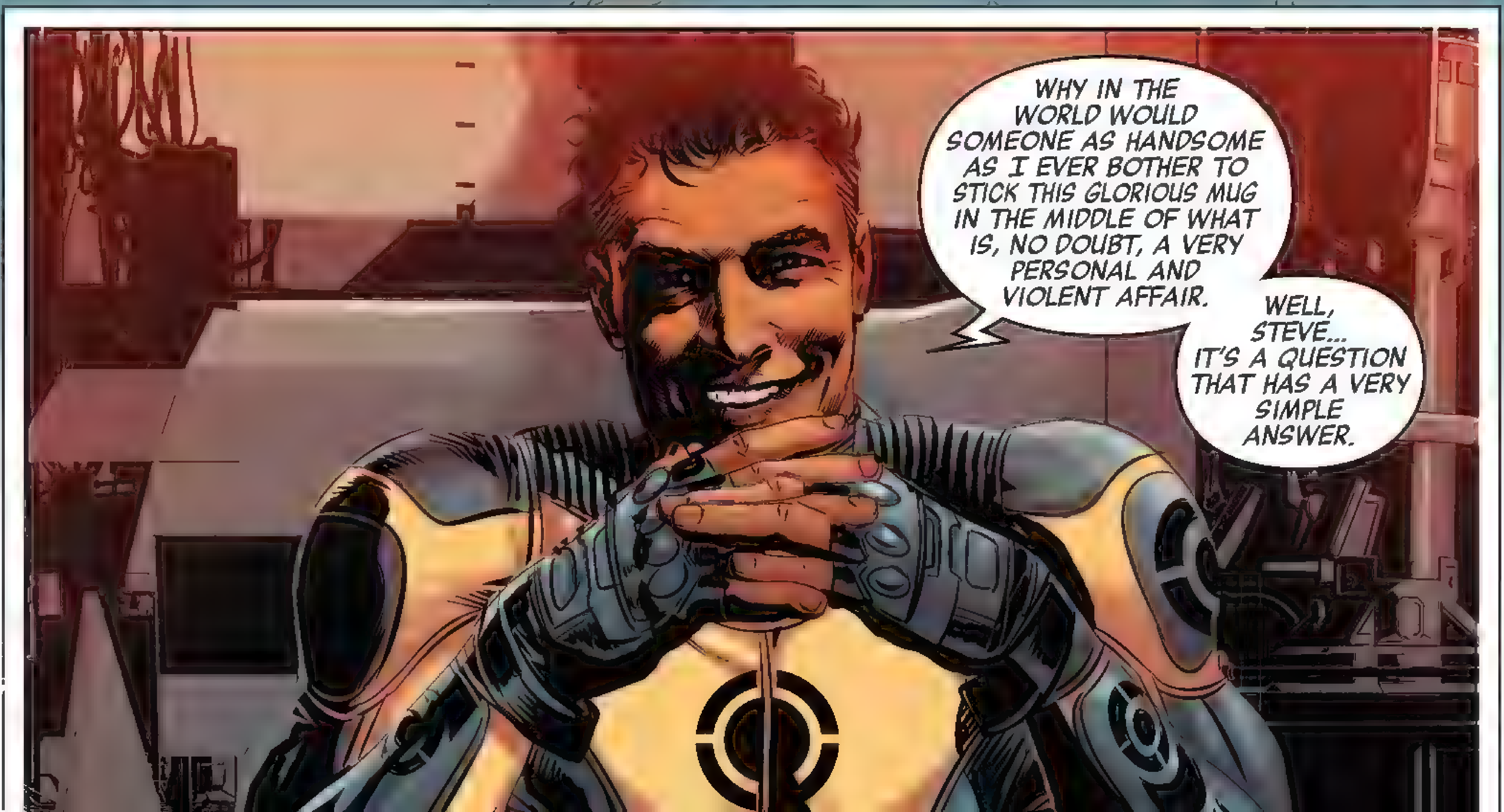
ARE WE GOING TO HAVE A PROBLEM HERE, BOYS...
OR CAN WE FINALLY PUT A QUIET END TO THIS GAME OF CHASE?
HAPPY TO COMPLY, CLINT. BUT I DON'T THINK DOCTOR RICHARDS AND I ARE THE ONES YOU SHOULD BE WORRIED ABOUT.
BZZTTT
MESSAGE RECEIVED.
STEVE, I'VE GOT REED AND THE BEAST UNDER WRAPS, BUT CAPTAIN BRITAIN, BLACK PANTHER AND THE HULK ARE ALMOST DONE WITH THE WAR MACHINES AND ARE ABOUT TO BECOME A BIG PROBLEM.
PLEASE ADVISE.
STAND BY, CLINT.
MARIA, ARE WE THERE?
YES, SIR. IN POSITION.
OKAY, SEND IN--
WE'VE GOT A PROBLEM!

WHAT IN THE...
AND FINALLY WE COME TO STRATEGY-- HOW TO ACHIEVE YOUR GOALS.
I WON'T BOTHER GOING INTO LIMITED SCENARIOS FOR CLEARLY DEFINED OPPONENTS OR SITUATIONS. THESE ARE SIMPLE AND YOU ARE WELL BEYOND NEEDING YOUR FATHER'S ADVICE ON HANDLING THOSE...
ATTENTION: AGENTS OF S.H.I.E.L.D.
BUT WHEN FACING A WELL-SEASONED OR TRULY GIFTED OPPONENT, YOU MUST ALWAYS ATTEMPT TO REDEFINE YOUR OPPONENT'S BASE UNDERSTANDING OF THE ENCOUNTER.
YOU ATTACK THEIR PRIMARY HYPOTHESES.
FOR EXAMPLE: IF THERE IS AN EXPECTATION THAT A CONFLICT IS BETWEEN TWO PARTIES-- ONE OF THEM BEING YOURS...

THE FIRST THING YOU DO...
IS INTRODUCE A THIRD.
THIS IS THE AVENGERS ORDERING YOU TO STAND DOWN.

"YOU CAN'T WIN" PART II


CADIZ, SPAIN.
THE AIRSPACE ABOVE AN ILLUMINATI SAFEHOUSE.
I KNOW WHAT YOU'RE THINKING...


WHY IN THE WORLD WOULD SOMEONE AS HANDSOME AS I EVER BOTHER TO STICK THIS GLORIOUS MUG IN THE MIDDLE OF WHAT IS, NO DOUBT, A VERY PERSONAL AND VIOLENT AFFAIR.
WELL, STEVE... IT'S A QUESTION THAT HAS A VERY SIMPLE ANSWER.

IT'S LOVE.
I JUST LOVE THE IDEA OF THE AVENGERS. THE MIGHTIEST OF THE MIGHTY COMING TOGETHER TO ACCOMPLISH SEEMINGLY IMPOSSIBLE THINGS. A GROUP COMMITTED TO PROTECTING THE EARTH WHILE PUTTING ASIDE ALL THEIR PERSONAL DIFFERENCES.
SO, I HAD TO ASK MYSELF... ARE WE FACING AN IMPOSSIBLE TASK? UH-HUH. CHECK. IS IT A LARGE ENOUGH THREAT THAT IT REQUIRES OUR PROTECTING THE ENTIRE PLANET? ABSO-FREAKING-LUTELY.
FINALLY, ARE WE PUTTING ASIDE OUR PERSONAL DIFFERENCES IN ORDER TO DO SO? NO. YOU AND YOUR FRIENDS IN HIDING MOST CERTAINLY ARE NOT.
WHICH IS WHERE WE COME IN...AND WE AVENGERS EXPECT A LOT BETTER THAN WHAT WE'VE BEEN SEEING OUT OF OUR FELLOW BROTHERS AND SISTERS.
SO, WHAT I'D LIKE TO SEE NOW IS AN IMMEDIATE STOP TO THE FIGHTING AND A START TO THE FIGURING THIS THING OUT. NOW...ARE YOU GONNA DO THAT, STEVE?
OR AM I GONNA HAVE TO--
CLICK!
MARIA, I'M BEGINNING TO THINK THE GREATEST THREAT THE AVENGERS HAVE EVER FACED IS HEROES WHO LOVE TO HEAR THEMSELVES TALK.
NO COMMENT, SIR.
CLICK!
GIVE US AN UPDATE, RHODEY.
I'M IN THE ZONE, STEVE, BUT UNFORTUNATELY I'M ALSO DOWN TO MY LAST WAVE OF WAR MACHINES.
SO I'M ALMOST DONE AND WILL CERTAINLY BE USELESS AGAINST AN ADDITIONAL THREAT. IF YOU'VE GOT SOMETHING UP YOUR SLEEVE, NOW'S THE TIME.
THAT'S EXACTLY WHAT I WAS THINKING.
MARIA?
ON IT.
DIRECTOR HILL TO DECK COMMAND...

"DEPLOY THE PACKAGE."
OKAY, IT'S TIME.
LET'S GO.
YOU SHOULDN'T BE DOING THIS.
IT'S WRONG.
ORDERS ARE ORDERS, PAL. AND IF YOU DON'T MIND ME SAYING...
IF YOU REALLY FELT THAT WAY, I THINK YOU'D BE A LITTLE MORE OUTRAGED.
I DON'T REALLY HAVE A CHOICE IN THE MATTER.
WELL, US EITHER.
OFF YOU GO.
HELLO, DOCTOR, YOU MUST BE GETTING TIRED OF SITTING IN THAT CELL ALL DAY, EVERY DAY.
HOW WOULD YOU LIKE TO TAKE A TRIP? GET OUTSIDE? MAYBE GET A LITTLE EXERCISE?
SOUNDS GREAT, I SAID. ANY CHANCE OF SOME DECENT SCENERY. SOMETHING OF A VIEW?
OH, THEY SAID. IT'LL TAKE YOUR BREATH AWAY.
SIGH.
DIRECTOR HILL...
PACKAGE DEPLOYED.

PACKAGE ON ITS WAY, STEVE.
BUT I GOTTA ASK, SHOULDN'T I FEEL A BIT GUILTY ABOUT JUST THROWING A GUY OFF THE SIDE OF A HELICARRIER?
HIS ALTERNATE-WORLD GENOCIDAL AVENGERS CAME HERE FROM AN EARTH THEY CONQUERED, MARIA.
NO, I DON'T FEEL BAD.
SYSTEM ARMED.
"IN FACT, I THINK THE ACTIONS OF OUR FRIENDS DOWN THERE ABSOLUTELY MERIT A RUN-IN WITH AN EMOTIONALLY NEUTERED, SOCIOPATH BANNER.
"MAKING THAT HAPPEN IS JUST A MATTER OF SIGNALING HIS IMPLANTED CONTROL NODE.
"AND I GOT NO PROBLEM FLIPPING THAT SWITCH."
"SYSTEM ACTIVATED."

WHOA.
YEAH. SEISMOLOGISTS ALL OVER THE PLANET ARE HAVING A FIELD DAY RIGHT NOW...
BUT IT'S THE BREATHER WE NEEDED. RETASK ALL AVAILABLE S.H.I.E.L.D. PERSONNEL TO HANDLE DA COSTA'S TEAM, WHILE WE--
FWASSSHHH!
WHAT THE--
HELLO, STEVE.
ANY CHANCE YOU MIGHT BE MORE OPEN TO ENDING THIS IF THE REQUEST CAME FROM AN OLD FRIEND?
OLD FRIENDS IS WHAT GOT US HERE, NATASHA.

AND THIS IS WHERE YOU RAN OFF TO?
TO JOIN UP WITH SOME OTHER SIDE?
THAT'S MY PROBLEM, STEVE. THERE REALLY AREN'T SIDES HERE AT ALL. IN FACT--
IN FACT NOTHING, NATASHA.
THERE ARE SIDES, AND THOSE PEOPLE DOWN THERE... THEY'RE ON THE WRONG ONE.
THIS ISN'T PETTY. THERE'S A POINT TO IT, AND YOU USED TO UNDERSTAND THAT.
WELL, IF WE CAN'T DO THIS THE EASY WAY...
BZZZT!
ROBERTO. CAPTAIN MARVEL'S RETURNED FROM LOW ORBIT...
I DON'T THINK THERE'S GOING TO BE A SOFT SOLUTION HERE.
ALL RIGHT...
LOOKS LIKE YOU'RE ON, SHANG.

HOW MANY 'YOUS' ARE YOU SENDING?
ALL OF THEM.

GETTING WORD OF SHANG CHI APPEARING ALL OVER THIS CARRIER. MULTIPLE SIGHTINGS, MULTIPLE DECKS.
WE'RE LOSING GROUND FAST. I'M GONNA PREP THE THING FOR THE THING I'M NOT SO HOT ABOUT...
COME ON, STEVE. IT DOESN'T HAVE TO END LIKE THIS.
END?
THIS DOESN'T END UNTIL THEY ANSWER FOR WHAT THEY'VE DONE, NATASHA.
IT DOESN'T WASH OFF. UNDERSTAND?
CAROL...
YEAH?
PLEASE KEEP THESE GOOD PEOPLE FROM GETTING IN THE WAY...
...AS OUR FIGHT'S NOT WITH THEM.

PSSSHTTT!
YOU HAVE THE BRIDGE.
I'M GONNA BE SICK. YOU SURE THIS IS GOING TO WORK?
MOBILE CONTROL UNIT IS ONLINE...
SENDING COMMAND.
"CATCH."
WHHUMP!
NOT GONNA LIE...
I COULD GET USED TO HAVING A FULL-TIME REMOTE-CONTROL HULK.

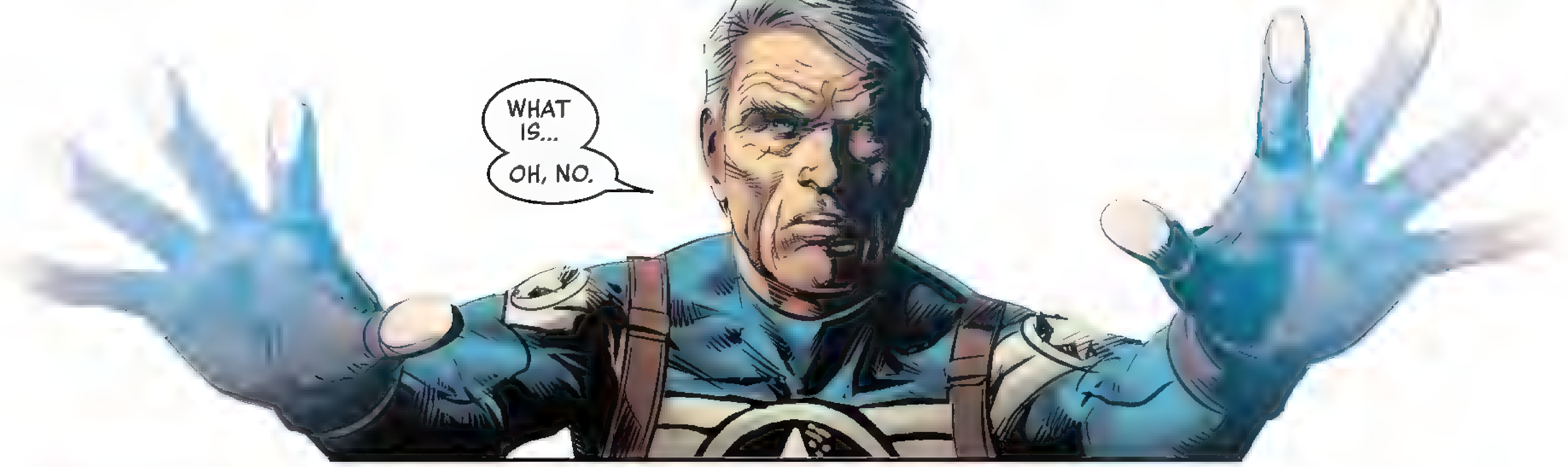
MIGHT MAKE DAYS LIKE THESE A LITTLE MORE INFREQUENT.
STEVE!
PLEASE! I'M BEGGING YOU. JUST LET US DO WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE. IT'S NOT TOO LATE...WE THINK THERE ARE STILL OPTIONS--THINGS WE HAVEN'T TRIED.
DON'T MAKE THIS ANY WORSE THAN IT ALREADY IS.
HRMPT!
YOU THERE, SAM?
YES.
OKAY.... READY TO LET THESE PEOPLE IN ON OUR LITTLE SECRET?
UH-HUH. ABOUT TIME.
WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE, HENRY? YOU PEOPLE AND YOUR BIG IDEAS.
YOU GOT PLANS...WELL, SO DO I.

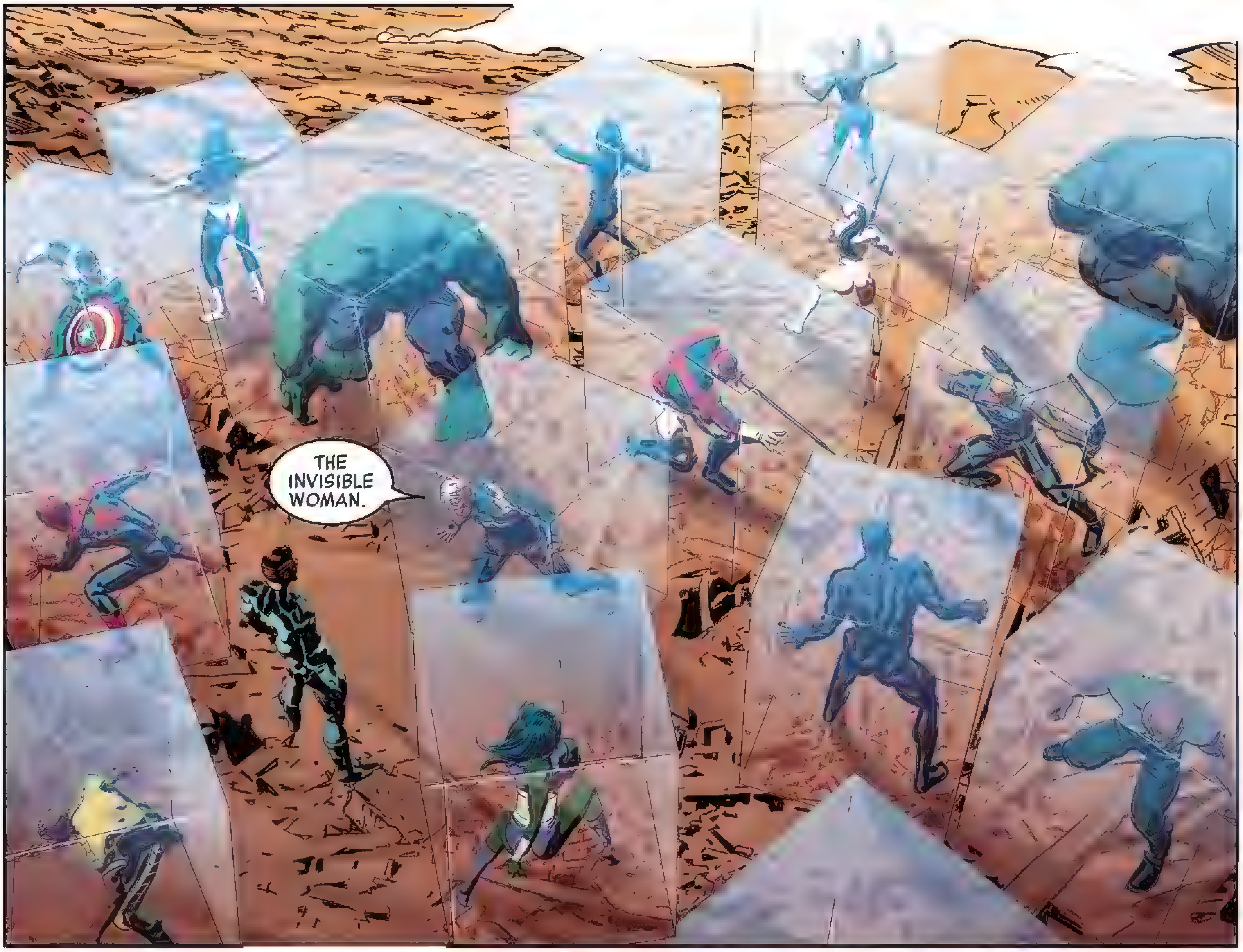
CAPTAIN AMERICA
LUKE CAGE
WHITE TIGER
SHE-HULK
SPIDER-MAN
BLUE MARVEL
SPECTRUM
POWER MAN
THE PROLONGED OBJECT OF ANY PLAN IS NOT TO GET WHAT YOU WANT, BUT TO DISCOVER WHAT YOUR OPPONENT IS CAPABLE OF.
WHAT YOU ARE INTERESTED IN IS GAUGING THEIR RESPONSE TO YOUR ACTIONS.

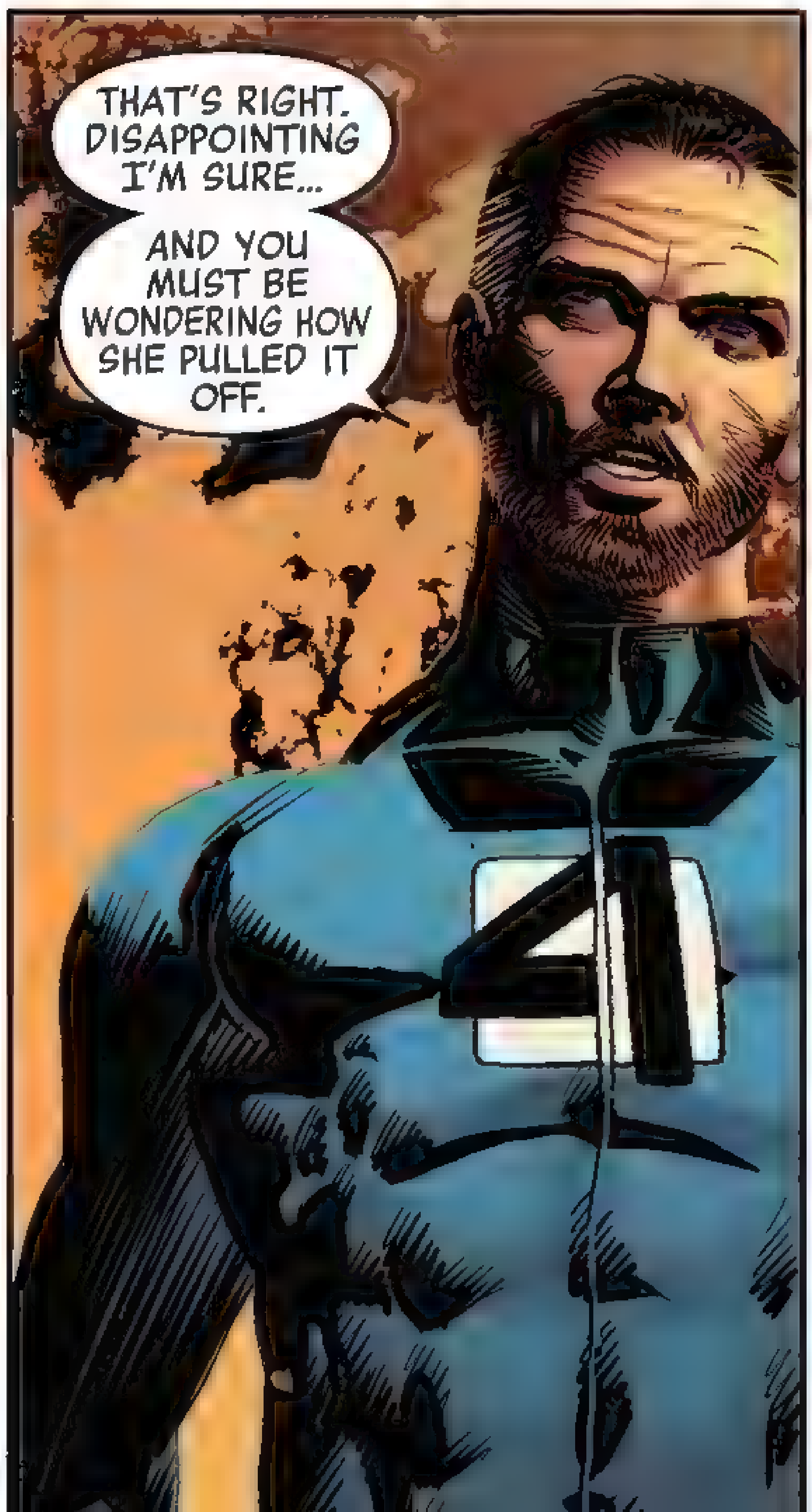
WHEN I SPOKE OF CHALLENGING A GIFTED OPPONENT'S PRIMARY HYPOTHESIS, I USED THE EXAMPLE OF DISRUPTING A CONFLICT BETWEEN TWO PARTIES--YOU AND THEM--BY INTRODUCING A THIRD GROUP...
YOUR OPPONENT'S RESPONSE TO THIS WILL INFORM YOUR NEXT ACTION.
FOR INSTANCE, LET US EXAMINE MY RECENT CONFLICT WITHIN THE MULTIFACETED AVENGERS MACHINE AS A TEST CASE FOR EFFECTIVE PLANNING.
STEVE ROGERS' RESPONSE TO THE THIRD-PARTY SCENARIO (THE AVENGERS WORLD TEAM) WAS THE INTRODUCTION OF AN ALT-UNIVERSE HULK ANALOG.
AN EFFECTIVE CHOICE. UNPREDICTABLE. UNEXPECTED.

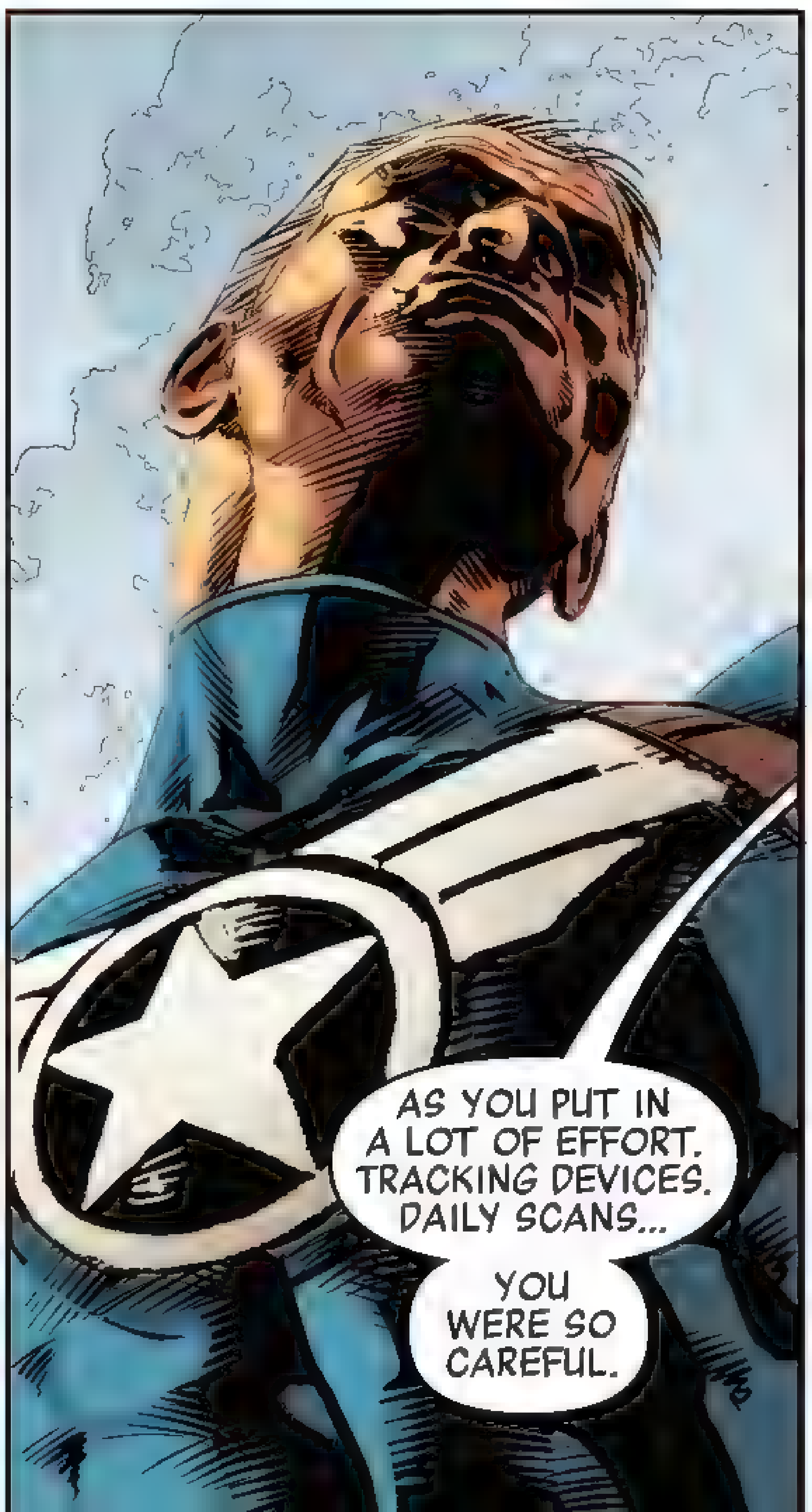
BUT EVEN GIVEN THAT, IF THE HULK WOULD HAVE BEEN HIS SOLE RESPONSE, IT WOULD HAVE BEEN A FUTILE EFFORT AS HE WOULD HAVE EXPOSED HIS TRUE INTENTIONS TOO EARLY FOR THE NUMBER OF VARIABLES AT PLAY.
BUT THIS IS STEVE ROGERS WE'RE TALKING ABOUT, VALERIA...SO IT WAS NOT.
THE HULK DID SERVE AS AN EXCELLENT BRANCHING SCENARIO, ENABLING CAPTAIN ROGERS TO HOLD DOWN TWO FRONTS (S.H.I.E.L.D. ENGAGED WITH THE AVENGERS WORLD, WHILE HE ENGAGED WITH US).
IN FACT, HAD HE NOT SUFFERED CONSIDERABLE LOSSES MAINTAINING A ZONE OF CONFLICT (PREVENTING US FROM AN EARLY TACTICAL RETREAT VIA TRANSLOCATOR), THE HULK GAMBIT MIGHT HAVE SUCCEEDED IN MAKING US INTRODUCE OUR ASSETS INTO THE FIELD EARLIER THAN DESIRED.

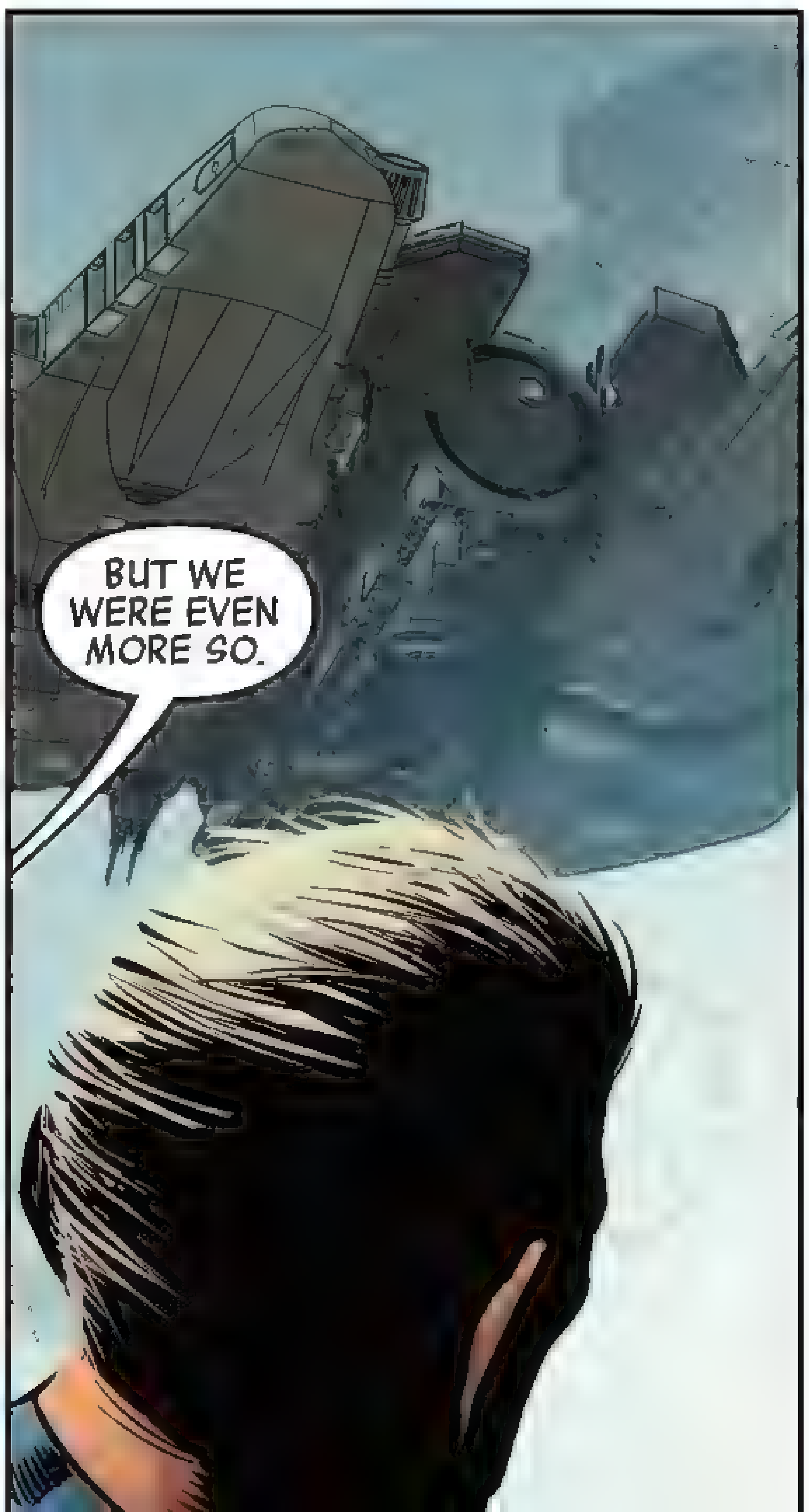
BUT HE DID SUFFER LOSSES, SO HE WAS FORCED TO INTRODUCE A FOURTH PARTY--HIS SECRET AVENGERS.
YOU!
IMMENSELY POWERFUL. TACTICALLY VARIED. AN EXCELLENT STRATEGEM, BUT UNFORTUNATELY FOR HIM, HIS LAST PIECE AVAILABLE ON THE BOARD.
IT'S OVER, RICHARDS!
TIME TO PAY!
HAVEN'T WE ALL PAID ENOUGH THIS TIME?
REMEMBER, AS I SAID EARLIER, THE OBJECT OF ANY PLAN IS NOT TO GET WHAT YOU WANT, BUT TO DISCOVER WHAT YOUR OPPONENT IS CAPABLE OF...
AND ONCE YOU KNOW THAT, YOU CAN MANIPULATE THE BOARD TO ENGINEER, AND MANAGE, A SUCCESSFUL ENDGAME.


WHAT IS...
OH, NO.


THE INVISIBLE WOMAN.


THAT'S RIGHT. DISAPPOINTING I'M SURE...
AND YOU MUST BE WONDERING HOW SHE PULLED IT OFF.


AS YOU PUT IN A LOT OF EFFORT. TRACKING DEVICES. DAILY SCANS...
YOU WERE SO CAREFUL.


BUT WE WERE EVEN MORE SO.

HERE SHE IS NOW.
IF YOU WANT, I'M SURE SHE'LL WALK YOU THROUGH EXACTLY HOW WE DID IT, BUT I'M GUESSING YOU'RE GOING TO BE MUCH MORE INTERESTED IN EXACTLY WHAT HAPPENS NEXT.
THE THING ABOUT ENDGAMES IS THIS...
IT'S REALLY TWO STRATEGIES IN ONE.
FIRST, YOU SHOW THEM WHAT THEY GUESSED MIGHT HAVE BEEN COMING.
AND THEN...

YOU SHOW THEM WHAT THEY DIDN'T.

“WE THREE KINGS”

WAKANDA.
THEN.
COME FORWARD, MY SON.
I HAVE A GIFT FOR YOU.
WHAT IS IT, FATHER?
THIS BELONGED TO MY FATHER AND TO HIS FATHER BEFORE HIM.
IT IS A *KING'S BLADE*, T'CHALLA...
AND IT BELONGS TO A KING.

CADIZ, SPAIN.
NOW.
WHAT IS NAMOR DOING HERE, REED?
WHAT IS THIS?
DO YOU TRUST ME?
TRUST ME.

HELLO, EVERYONE.
SORRY I WAS RUNNING LATE. CAN I HELP IN ANY WAY?
AGENT RICHARDS... I'M GONNA GIVE YOU EXACTLY ***THREE SECONDS*** TO DROP THIS FIELD AND EXPLAIN WHAT YOU'RE DOING...
OR I'M GONNA HAVE TO APOLOGIZE FOR WHERE MY TEMPER TAKES ME.
I'LL BE HAPPY TO DO THAT, STEVE...
AS LONG AS YOU PROMISE TO LISTEN TO WHAT THEY HAVE TO SAY.
YOU GOT FIVE MINUTES.

SO...THE TWO OF YOU ALL ALONG?
YES.
YOU'RE JUST AS BAD AS HE IS.
WAIT, HOW DID YOU GET BY THE SCREENINGS, SUE? YOU KNEW ABOUT THE HEADSHOP, BUT THERE WERE DAILY SCANS YOU DIDN'T EVEN KNOW ABOUT.
BECAUSE THEY ARE WHO THEY ARE, AND *WE* ARE MERE MORTALS.
ACTUALLY, IT'S NOT THAT DIFFICULT IF YOU UNDERSTAND EXACTLY HOW THE--
I DON'T WANT TO HEAR IT.
I--ONCE AGAIN--DO NOT NEED REMINDING JUST HOW CLEVER ALL OF YOU ARE, AND HOW EFFICIENT AND INVENTIVE YOU CAN BE GIVEN THE RIGHT SITUATION...
I REMEMBER PERFECTLY FINE.

NO ONE LIKES BEING DECEIVED, BUT WE HAVE A PLAN, STEVE--TO REMOVE ***THE CABAL...***
IF IT ONLY TOOK ONE MORE LIE TO UNRAVEL THE ENTIRE WEB--BUY A MOMENT FOR US TO ACTUALLY TALK--THAT'S SOMETHING WE CAN LIVE WITH, ISN'T IT?
NO, HANK. I CAN'T LIVE WITH ANY MORE OF THIS... AND YOU SHOULDN'T BE ABLE TO EITHER.
ALL RIGHT. WHY DON'T WE MOVE ON TO ADDRESSING THE LARGER, MORE SIGNIFICANT PROBLEM, GENTLEMEN?
WE CAN DO THAT TOO, ROBERTO.
WELL, SUPER. CAN I JUST SAY THAT I THINK IT'S *FANTASTIC* WE'RE OVERCOMING DIFFERENCES AND HOPEFULLY COMING TOGETHER ON THIS? SO...
...LET'S HEAR THIS LONG AWAITED SOLUTION TO THE INCURSION PROBLEM.
I DON'T THINK SO-- NOT YET.
NO STICK. NO CARROT. UNDERSTAND?
I WANT IT CLEAR THAT THIS DOESN'T END WITHOUT YOU PEOPLE ANSWERING FOR WHAT YOU DID.
PEOPLE WHO DO WHAT YOU'VE DONE DON'T GET HAPPY ENDINGS.
NAMOR...
IT COULDN'T BE AVOIDED-- DESTROYING THAT FIRST WORLD. IT HAD TO BE DONE. THERE WAS NO OTHER CHOICE.
GIVEN THE CHANCE...I WOULD DO IT AGAIN.
IF YOU THINK THIS IS HELPING YOUR--
BUT IT WAS ***WRONG.***

I KNOW THAT. I HAD TO DO IT... BUT IT WAS WRONG.
AND I SHOULD ANSWER FOR THAT.
AM I HEARING YOU RIGHT? YOU'LL SURRENDER? TURN YOURSELF IN?
YES.
THERE WILL BE A TRIAL--YOU UNDERSTAND THAT, DON'T YOU?
I DO.
I DESERVE WHAT IS COMING TO ME. I'M NOT RUNNING FROM ANY PUNISHMENT.
AND WHAT ABOUT YOU, REED?
IF IT COMES TO THAT, I'LL DO WHAT'S BEST...
OR AT THE VERY LEAST, WHAT I NEED TO.
AND THE REST OF YOU THAT WERE THERE?
HANK?
THERE WERE ALWAYS VERY FEW POSSIBLE ENDINGS TO THIS, STEVE. I HAVE PREPARED MYSELF AS BEST I CAN FOR ALL OF THEM.
AND YOU, T'CHALLA--YOU'LL TURN YOURSELF IN?
ABSOLUTELY NOT.

WE DON'T HAVE *TIME* FOR THIS.
I DON'T CARE. WE'RE NOT PUTTING THIS OFF ANY LONGER. HERE AND NOW, THERE'S NOTHING THAT MATTERS MORE.
ACTUALLY, THAT'S NOT TRUE...
THERE'S A REASON THIS IS HAPPENING *NOW*... JUST LIKE THERE'S A REASON NAMOR IS HERE.
WHEN I SAY WE DON'T HAVE TIME FOR THIS...I MEAN, WE LITERALLY *DO NOT HAVE TIME.*
IN A LITTLE UNDER TWO HOURS, THERE'S GOING TO BE AN INCURSION...
AND NAMOR HAS TO MAKE SURE THE CABAL ARE THERE WHEN IT HAPPENS.

NECROPOLIS.
TWO HOURS LATER.
07:43:10
IT'S TIME.
HAS IT BEEN DECIDED WHO ELSE IS GOING?
LORD THANOS WANTS US ALL AT THE INCURSION POINT.
THERE IS URGENCY IN THE AIR.
OH? A *CAUTIONARY* COURSE OF ACTION?
HOW SURPRISING.
STAY IF YOU WISH, BUT SOME SURPRISES CAUSE EVEN THE FEARLESS TO PAUSE, NAMOR...
MAXIMUS HAS DISCOVERED SOMETHING... UNSETTLING.

THE CLOCK IS RUNNING OUT, PRINCE NAMOR. TICK TOCK. TICK TOCK.
IT'S IMPORTANT TO BE **PREPARED** IN THE COMING DAYS. YOU DON'T KNOW WHICH ONE IS GOING TO BE YOUR LAST.
THERE'S BEEN AN EVENT, AND HE SAYS OUR TIMELINE GROWS SHORTER...
SO NOW YOU UNDERSTAND MY CAUTION, AND WHY THIS NEXT WORLD GETS OUR METTLE AND NOT ONE BIT LESS.
I KNOW... WHAT *THEY* KNOW.
I DON'T GO ***ANYWHERE*** WITHOUT MY LITTLE LEXICON OF HOPE.
BUT I MUST SAY...

...THERE USED TO BE MORE SUSPENSE AT THE BEGINNING OF THESE THINGS-- I MISS THE NOT KNOWING.
MAYBE WE SHOULD JUST LET THEM COME...DO WHAT THEY DO...
ALL OF THIS IS GETTING REPETITIVE...
AND I'M ITCHING FOR SOME EXCITEMENT.
IT ONLY TAKES A SINGLE SIDERA MARIS TO SUMMON THEIR MASTERS, MAXIMUS.
BEST NOT RISK A MAPMAKER.
BEST NOT RISK WHAT MIGHT FOLLOW THEM.

HERE THEY COME.

THEN.
COME FORWARD, T'CHALLA.
YOU WANTED TO SEE ME?
I HAVE A GIFT FOR YOU, SISTER.
WHEN I WAS A BOY, FATHER GAVE ME HIS BLADE, WHICH BELONGED TO HIS FATHER, THE KING BEFORE HIM.
AND NOW, SHURI...IT IS YOURS.
FOR IT IS A KING'S BLADE... AND IT BELONGS WITH *MY* *QUEEN.*

SO YOU PLANNED ALL THIS TO COINCIDE WITH AN INCURSION?
YOU PLANNED IT... RIGHT DOWN TO THE MINUTE?
OF COURSE NOT.
DOWN TO THE MINUTE WOULD REQUIRE AN *ABSURD* ACCOUNTING OF VARIABLES THAT, I BELIEVE, JUST ISN'T POSSIBLE.
BUT A WINDOW OF HOURS? WE COULD DO THAT.
IN FACT, WE *DID*.
OKAY. I'LL CONCEDE...IT'S IMPRESSIVE ENOUGH TO GIVE A MAN PAUSE.
EXPLAIN THE REST OF IT TO ME.
FOR SOME TIME, WE'VE BEEN ABLE TO PROJECT OUT WHAT KIND OF INCURSION IS GOING TO OCCUR.
WHAT'S COMING IS A *MAPMAKER WORLD*, WHICH IS SIGNIFICANT BECAUSE IT'S A COMPLETELY DEAD PLANET. THE PLAN IS SIMPLE--NAMOR IS GOING TO LEAD THE CABAL TO THE WORLD...
THEN THEY PAY FOR THEIR CRIMES... FOLLOWED BY US, I SUPPOSE.
OKAY. I'M NOT PRETENDING TO UNDERSTAND THE TOTAL MECHANICS OF THIS--AND MAYBE A LIFE OF SPYCRAFT HAS GIVEN ME AN INCREASED SENSE OF SELF-PRESERVATION--BUT HAS ANYONE CONSIDERED WHAT HAPPENS WHEN THEY TRY TO ESCAPE THE EXPLODING PLANET?
ACTUALLY, WE HAVE *YOUR* AVENGERS TEAM TO THANK FOR THAT SOLUTION, NATASHA.

YES. ROBERTO GAVE ME ACCESS TO SOME OF THE THINGS A.I.M. WAS DOING AS POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS TO THE INCURSION PROBLEM, AND...
HOLD ON A SECOND.
SAM, DID THE GOOD PROFESSOR MCCOY REALLY JUST *DOUBLE-AGENT* US? SAY IT ISN'T SO.
IT HURTS, SIR. RIGHT HERE.
THE LESSONS NEVER END, CHILDREN. AND WHAT DID WE LEARN TODAY?
MONEY CAN'T BUY YOU LOVE?
NEVER TRUST A BLUE MAN?
ARE YOU QUITE DONE?
NO. WE BOTH TALKED ABOUT IT, AND WE AGREED...YOU LOOKED COOLER AS A CAT.
CAN WE CONTINUE? *PLEASE.*
WHERE WAS... AH, YES--A.I.M.'S ESCUTCHEON... REED?

THE A.I.M. DESIGN WAS ORIGINALLY INTENDED TO PREVENT THE COLLISION OF WORLDS--IT'S A FIELD PROJECTOR THAT CREATES AN IMPENETRABLE BARRIER COVERING THE INCURSION POINT.
THE IDEA BEING THAT IF YOU CAN PREVENT THE TWO WORLDS FROM TOUCHING, YOU COULD--PERHAPS--PREVENT THE CASCADING FAILURE OF BOTH UNIVERSES.
"TWO PROTOTYPES WERE BUILT AND ONE WAS TESTED IN THE NEGATIVE ZONE USING TWO SMALL MOONS.
"IT SUCCEEDED, BUT ANALYSIS SHOWED THAT IT WOULDN'T HAVE HANDLED STRESSES BEYOND FIVE TIMES THE TEST AMOUNT."
SO...BAD FOR SAVING THE WORLD.
BUT PERFECT FOR KEEPING THE CABAL WHERE YOU WANT THEM.
LIKE I SAID, NAMOR WILL LEAD THEM TO THE MAPMAKER WORLD...
THEN THEY WILL SET THEIR BOMB IN PLACE. AFTER THAT, HE'LL LEAVE AND ACTIVATE THE SHIELD--WHICH WE WILL LAUNCH FROM OUR SIDE.
THEN YOU'RE GOING TO BLOW UP THE DEAD WORLD AND THE CABAL ALONG WITH IT?
YES.
THE LAST ACT OF A FREE MAN, I SUPPOSE.

THEN.
ALL THAT REMAINS OF WAKANDA IS ASH AND RUBBLE. SEE, BROTHER...IT'S *ALL* NECROPOLIS NOW.
A CITY OF GHOSTS. A KINGDOM OF NOTHING BUT THE DEAD.
CAN I TRUST YOU TO FINISH THIS?
I COULD DO BETTER-- I COULD STAY.
NO. YOU CAN'T.
THEN YOU HAVE MY WORD, SISTER.
I SWEAR IT.
THIS WAS OUR FATHER'S BLADE, T'CHALLA...
TAKE IT. FOR IT BELONGS TO A KING, AND ONLY YOU ARE KING NOW...
PUT THE BLADE WHERE IT BELONGS.

NOW.
THEY'RE ENGAGED.
WE'RE IN THE CLEAR.
OKAY. NOW, ROBERTO...
DOCTOR. YOU HAVE A GO. PLEASE LAUNCH THE PLATFORM.
UNDERSTOOD, SIR. IN THREE... TWO...ONE...
PLATFORM AWAY.

I'VE GOT A FIRM READ OF THE PLATFORM. IT'S SLOWING... SETTLING IN A STABLE POSITION OUTSIDE THE MIDPOINT OF BOTH WORLDS.
SIGNAL NAMOR.
PLATFORM IN PLACE.
BE-BOOP
THE ANTI-MATTER BOMB IS ARMED.
I'M LEAVING NOW.

REED...
WHERE'S T'CHALLA?

T'CHALLA!
I HAVE SOMETHING FOR YOU, NAMOR.
AND WHAT EXACTLY ARE YOU PLANNING ON DOING WITH THAT?
TAKE IT. FOR IT BELONGS TO A KING, AND ONLY YOU ARE KING NOW...
PUT THE BLADE WHERE IT BELONGS.

YOU... YOU *DARE?*
YOU DARE TO THINK YOU COULD KILL ME WITH A *KNIFE?*
NO. I JUST PUT THE BLADE WHERE IT WAS SUPPOSED TO GO.
THAT'S NOT WHAT'S GOING TO KILL YOU.

HUH?
OH! BLACK BOLT. WHAT ARE--
FAREWELL!

OKAY. FIRST THE SHIELD...
THEN THE TRIGGER.
I KNOW THAT LOOK. YOU'RE WONDERING...
WHAT AM I *WAITING* FOR?

NAMOR'S BIOLOGY AND GENETICS MAKE HIM INCREDIBLY RESISTANT TO DAMAGE, BUT EVEN HE DOESN'T HAVE THE ABILITY TO SIMPLY SHRUG OFF WHAT WE--AND THE RESULTING FALL FROM THIS PLATFORM--DID TO HIM.
"IT WILL TAKE A SECOND FOR HIM TO FULLY REGAIN HIS WITS...AND I WANT HIM COMPLETELY AWARE OF WHAT IS ABOUT TO HAPPEN TO HIM.
"SO WE WILL SPARE HIM A FEW MINUTES."
BECAUSE I WANT HIM TO KNOW--REALLY KNOW--*IT'S OVER.*
"TO FULLY REALIZE THERE'S NO FORGIVENESS FOR WHAT HE'S DONE.
"THAT THERE IS A PRICE AND HE'S FINALLY GOING TO PAY IT--THAT'S THERE'S NO MERCY FOR MEN LIKE HIM, AND EVEN IF THERE WAS, HE DOESN'T GET ANY.
"I WANT HIM TO KNOW THIS IS HOW IT ENDS.
"AND MORE THAN THAT...
"I WANT HIM TO KNOW... IT WAS ME."

CLK

WHERE IS HE, T'CHALLA?
WHERE'S NAMOR?
HE'S NOT COMING.
SO ENDS THE CABAL.

“8 MONTHS AGO...”

THE NECROPOLIS.
WAKANDA.

SOMETHING BAD HAPPENED HERE.

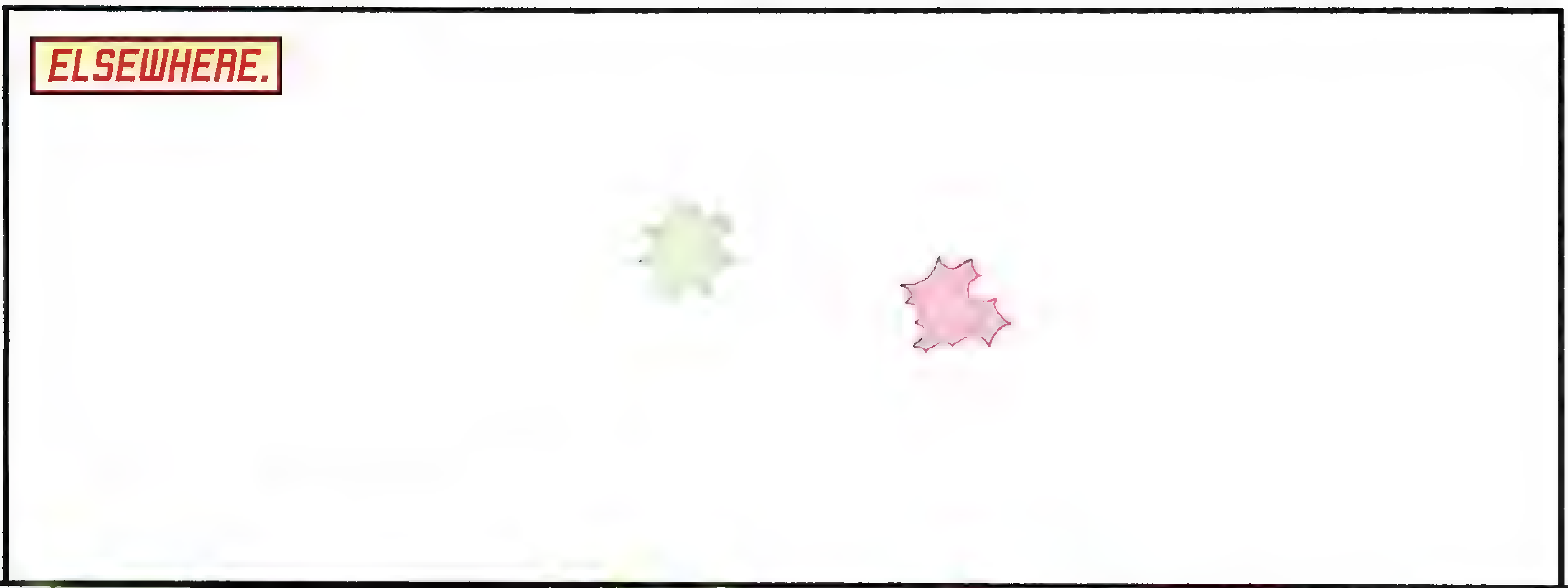
LATER.
WHEN YOU LOOK OUT AT ALL THIS--ALL THAT WE HAD A HAND IN...
...WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT, MY FRIEND?
SHOULD I EVEN ASK WHAT *YOU* THINK, T'CHALLA?
THAT WE ARE ALMOST AT THE END, BUT BEFORE WE REACH IT, THERE IS EVEN WORSE COMING.
I WISH I COULD SAY SOMETHING ELSE, BUT THAT'S THE TRUTH... AND WE DON'T HAVE MUCH ELSE LEFT.
I THINK YOU ARE RIGHT.
AND I BELIEVE WITH EACH PASSING DAY I GROW MORE AND MORE READY TO FACE IT.
OUR COMPANY JUST ARRIVED.

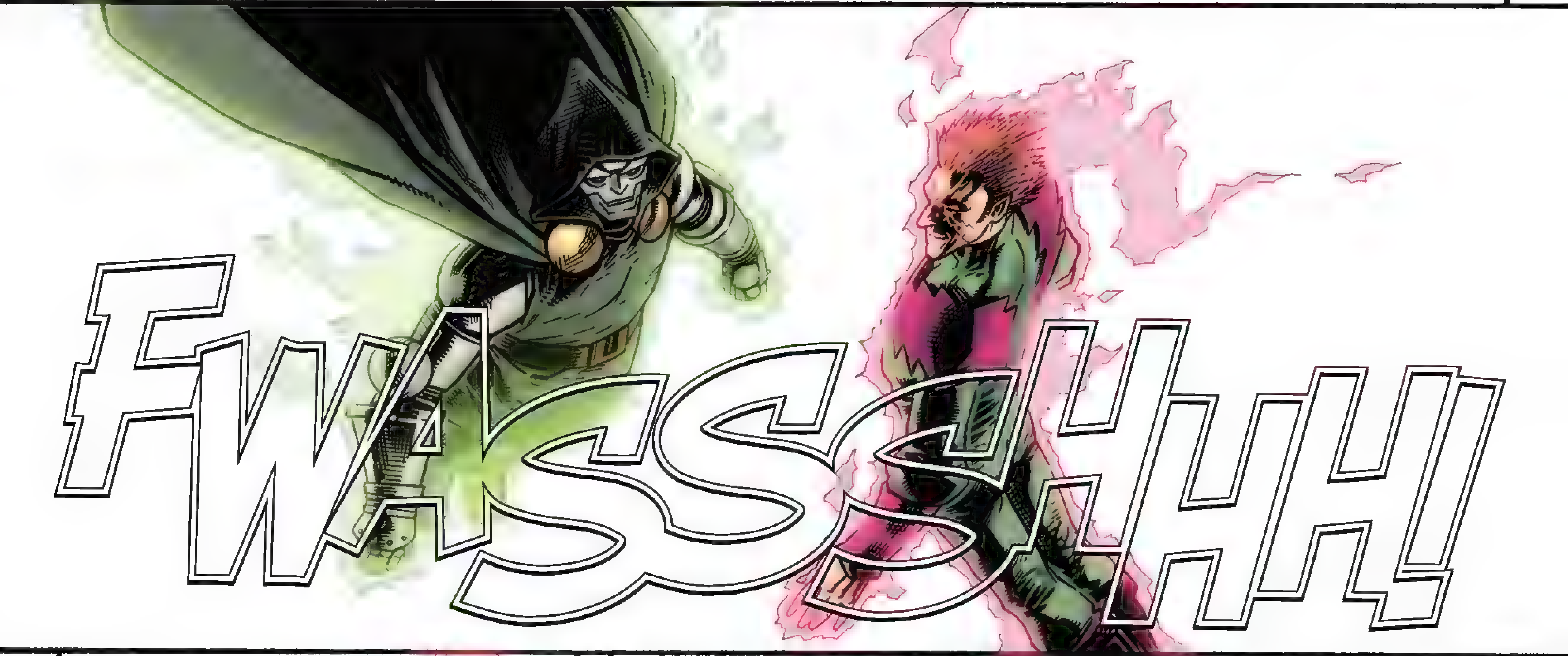
ARE YOU GOING TO TELL THEM EVERYTHING?
YES.
"IT'S THE TRUTH...
"WHAT ELSE DO WE HAVE?"

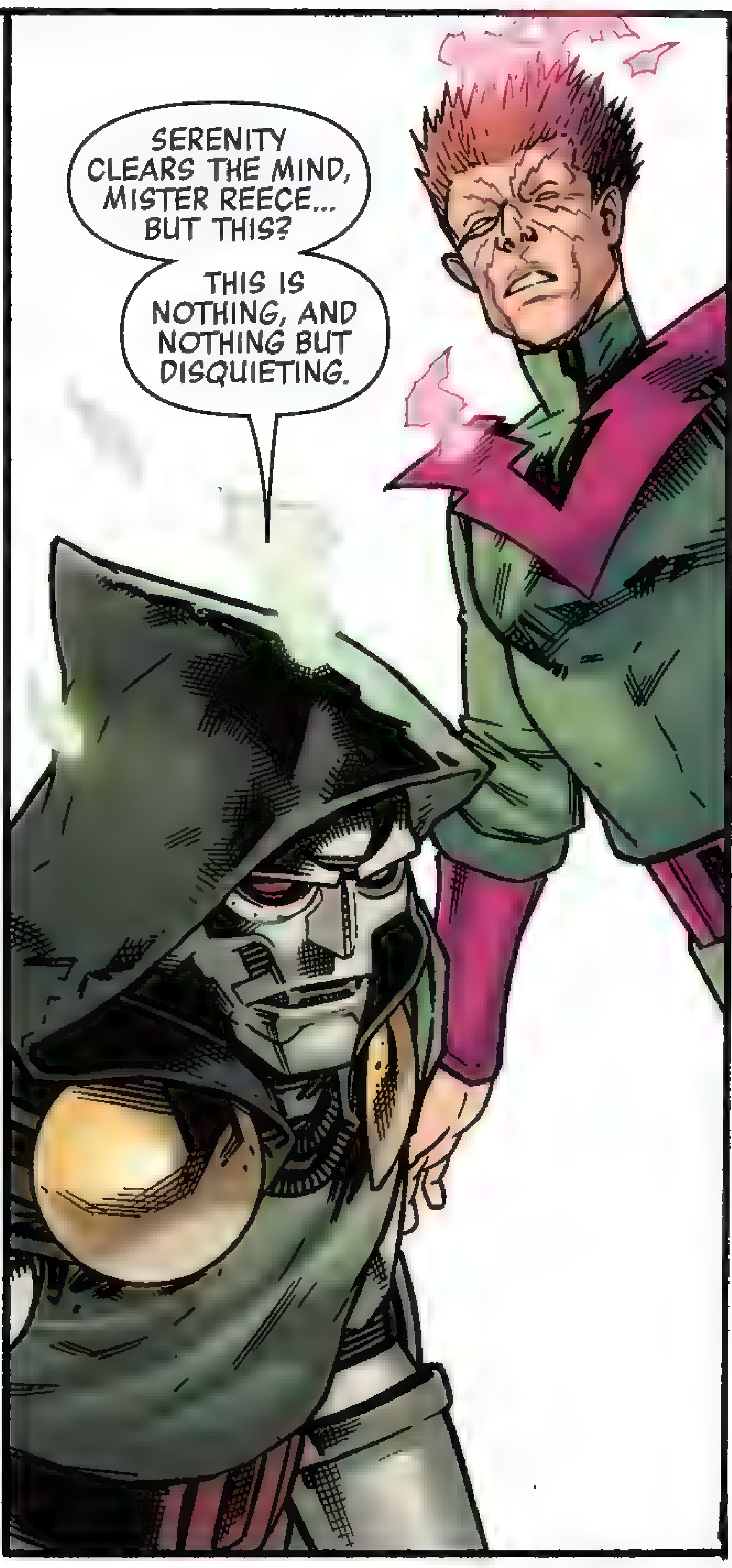
LATER.
SO WHAT IS IT WE'RE LOOKING AT?
WE HAVE THEORIES...
BUT IF I'M BEING COMPLETELY HONEST, WE'RE NOT SURE.
WHAT WE *DO* KNOW IS THAT THIS HAS HAPPENED AT EVERY SINGLE FORMER INCURSION SITE ON THIS EARTH.
IT'S A RECENT DEVELOPMENT THAT VARIOUS WORLD GOVERNMENTS, IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE CABAL, HAD KEPT QUIET, BUT GIVEN THE NEW STATUS QUO...
...SUNSPOT AND HIS TEAM HAVE BEEN ABLE TO GAIN ACCESS, HENCE THE FOOTAGE WE HAVE HERE.
WHO WOULD HAVE GUESSED POLITICIANS LOVED MONEY SO MUCH?

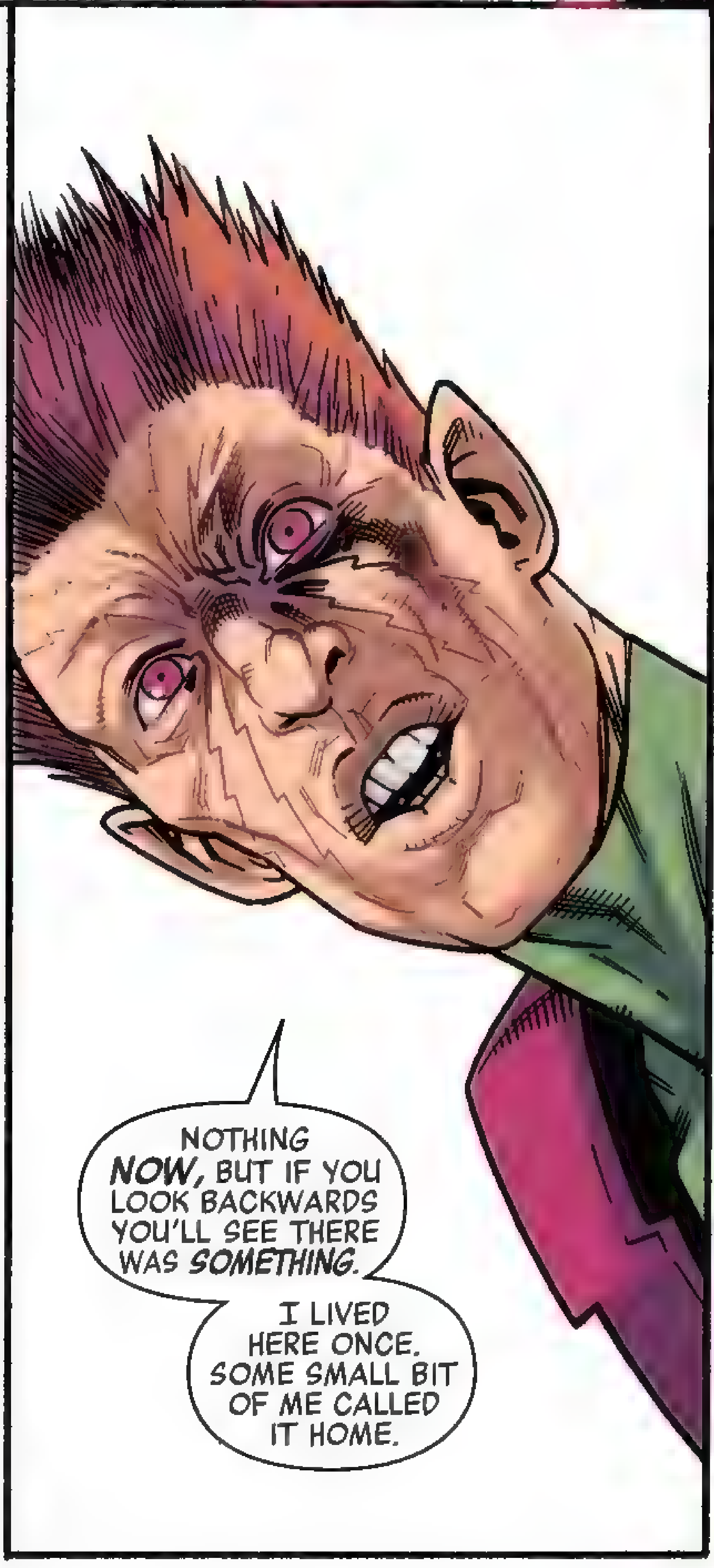
THE PERTINENT POINT BEING...
...EARLY A.I.M. DATA INDICATES THAT THE APPEARANCE OF THESE DOMES ROUGHLY COINCIDES WITH WHAT WAS THE CATALYST OF OUR RECENT ACTIVITY.
YOU MEAN THE WAY YOU MOVED EVERYONE AROUND THE BOARD AS YOU SAW FIT...
...AND HOW IT ENDED WITH A MAN'S MURDER?
YOU KNOW THAT WASN'T MY INTENTION.
WHAT ABOUT YOU, T'CHALLA?
DID YOU GET WHAT YOU WANTED?
WE SIT WITHIN EYESIGHT OF THE SMOLDERING RUINS OF MY NATION, BARTON.
I DIDN'T GET ANYTHING I WANTED. I HAVEN'T FOR QUITE SOME TIME.
WELL, WHAT *I* WANT...
...IS FOR ALL OF YOU TO STAY ON TASK, WITH YOUR HEAD IN THE HERE AND NOW.
I KNOW IT'S HARD TO HEAR, BUT NO ONE CARES ABOUT YOUR SINS OR ANGER...OR EVEN YOUR REGRET.
I ***WOULD*** CARE...BUT WE DON'T HAVE TIME.

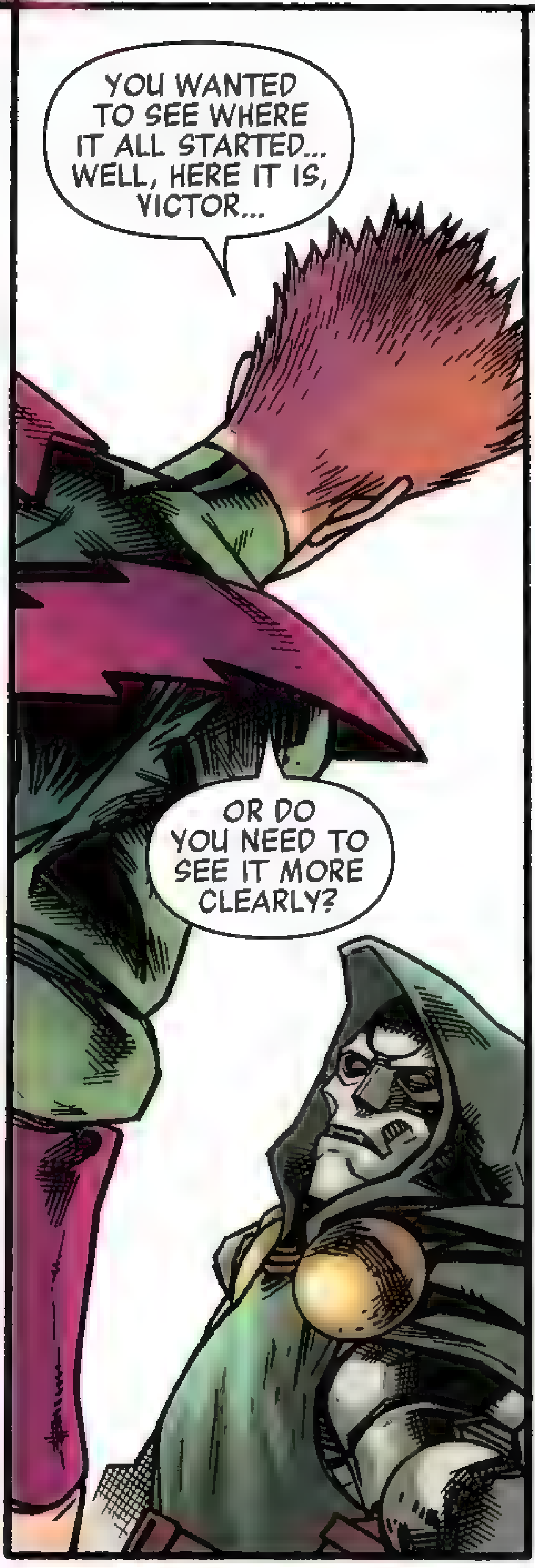
TIME. YES.
THAT'S WHAT EVERYONE NEEDS TO UNDERSTAND. I THINK THERE'S AN UNDENIABLE SIGNIFICANCE TO THESE SEEMINGLY UNCONNECTED EVENTS...I SPOKE OF A ***CATALYST.***
THERE'S A REASON FOR WHEN WE ACTED. IT WAS NECESSARY TO DO SO IN THE SHADOW OF A COMING INCURSION.
WE NEEDED THE URGENCY THAT THREAT PROVIDED.
BUT WHY ***THAT*** INCURSION? WHY AT THAT PARTICULAR TIME?
BECAUSE SOMETHING ELSE HAPPENED...
EVEN THOUGH WE WERE ON THE RUN FROM S.H.I.E.L.D. AND IN HIDING FROM THE CABAL, I MAINTAINED A MOBILE VERSION OF ***THE BRIDGE,*** WHICH ENABLED US TO OBSERVE THE MULTIVERSE.
THE COLLAPSE CONTINUED--UNABATED--AND INCURSIONS HAD CLAIMED THE VAST MAJORITY OF UNIVERSES, BUT STILL HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS REMAINED.
THEN SOMETHING HAPPENED--I DON'T KNOW EXACTLY WHAT--BUT THE CURRENT NUMBER OF REMAINING UNIVERSES NOW STANDS AT ***LESS THAN TWO DOZEN.***
SO... TIME?
WE ARE ALL OUT OF TIME.


ELSEWHERE.


FWASSSHHH!


SERENITY CLEARS THE MIND, MISTER REECE... BUT THIS?
THIS IS NOTHING, AND NOTHING BUT DISQUIETING.


NOTHING ***NOW,*** BUT IF YOU LOOK BACKWARDS YOU'LL SEE THERE WAS ***SOMETHING.***
I LIVED HERE ONCE. SOME SMALL BIT OF ME CALLED IT HOME.


YOU WANTED TO SEE WHERE IT ALL STARTED... WELL, HERE IT IS, VICTOR...
OR DO YOU NEED TO SEE IT MORE CLEARLY?

YES.
THEN YOU'LL NEED TO GET BUSY. I CAN SHOW YOU THE WAY, BUT I CAN'T OPEN THE DOOR.
DO YOU KNOW WHAT THIS IS, VICTOR?
I DO.
EVERYONE HAS LIMITS...
...EVERYONE BUT *DOOM*.

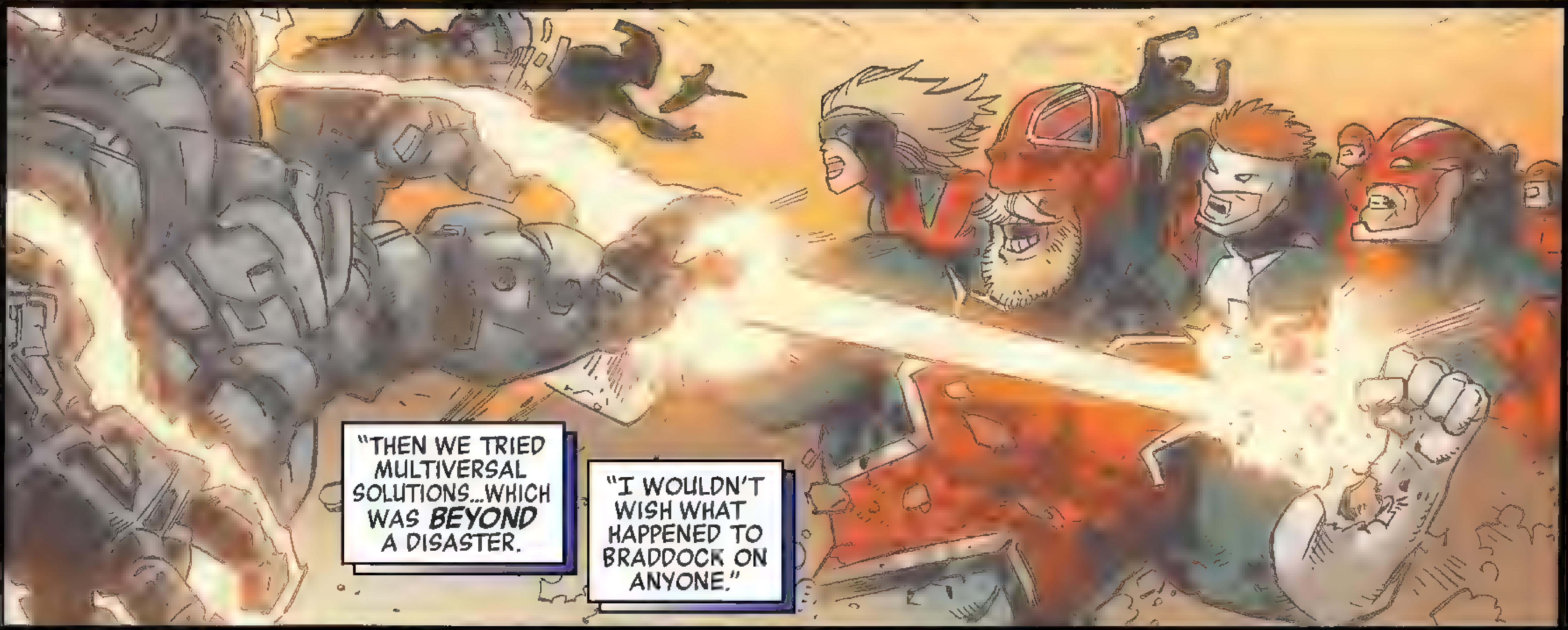
I'VE BUILT YOUR *DOOR,* MISTER REECE...
...CAN YOU SHOW US THE WAY NOW THAT I'VE OPENED IT?
THE WAY IS DOWN, VICTOR...
...ALL THE WAY DOWN.

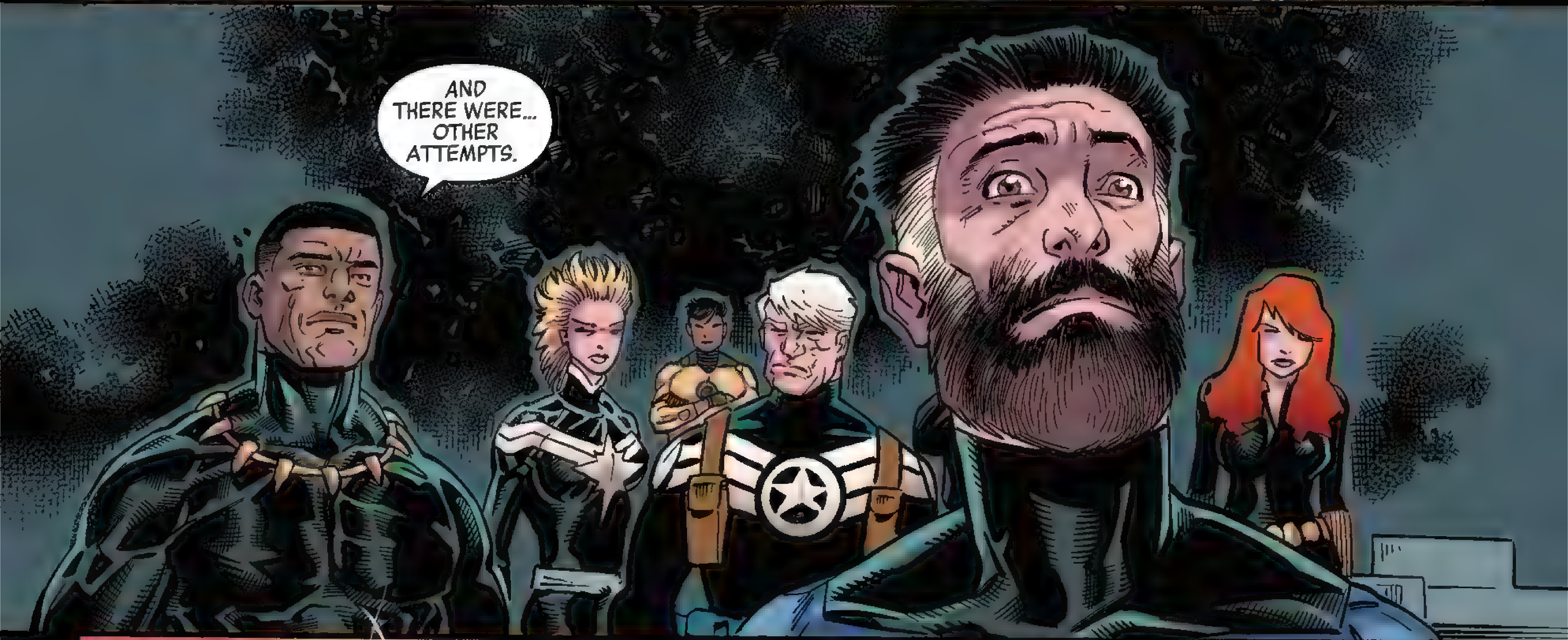
"A DOZEN?"
ONLY A *DOZEN* UNIVERSES LEFT?
TWO DOZEN, MANIFOLD. WELL, JUST UNDER...
CURRENTLY TWENTY-TWO, I THINK...BUT PROJECTIONS GET FUZZY WITH THE VARIABLES WE'RE TALKING ABOUT.
WELL, WHAT DOES THAT *MEAN?*
ACTUALLY...
WHY DON'T WE SKIP THE EXPLANATIONS AND JARGON, REED? SINCE, AS YOU SAY, WE'RE OUT OF TIME...
...JUST TELL US WHAT YOUR PLAN IS.
MY PLAN FOR WHAT?
YOUR PLAN FOR WHAT?
WHAT THE HELL DO YOU *THINK?* HOW TO STOP THIS!
YOU *DO* HAVE A PLAN, RIGHT?
I THINK I REMEMBER THE *IMPLICATION* OF A PLAN. AT THE VERY LEAST SOME *VAGUE PROMISE* OF A PLAN.
WHAT ELSE WERE YOU DOING ALL THESE MONTHS WHEN THE CABAL WAS BUYING YOU TIME WITH WHOLESALE SLAUGHTER IF YOU WEREN'T FIGURING THAT OUT?!

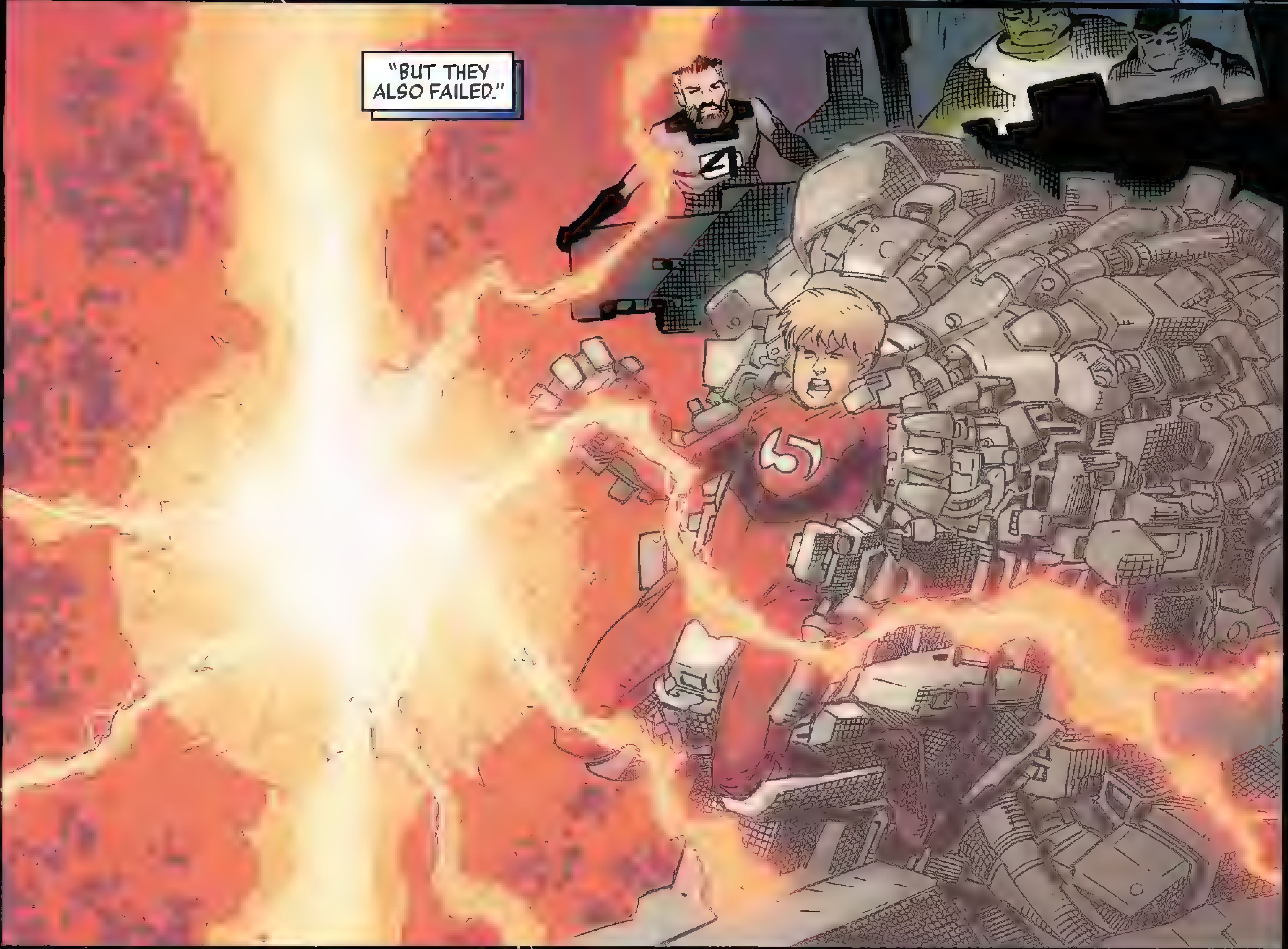
RUNNING FROM OUR FRIENDS.
YEAH.
WE ALL FEEL JUST TERRIBLE ABOUT THAT.
REED?
IF YOU STARE AT ALL THIS LONG ENOUGH, YOU START BELIEVING IT MIGHT MEAN SOMETHING THAT IT DOESN'T.
BUT THAT ISN'T REAL, STEVE.
IT ISN'T REAL *AT ALL.*
THERE WILL BE ANOTHER INCURSION. AND ANOTHER...BUT THERE HAVE BEEN *CHANGES.*
CHANGES SIGNIFICANT ENOUGH THAT WE PUT INTO ACTION ALL THE MACHINATIONS YOU WERE SWEPT UP IN.
CHANGES LIKE WHAT?
OUR ODDS ARE BETTER.

ANYTHING ELSE?
WE'VE RUN A LOT OF SIMULATIONS--AND I COULD BE WRONG, BECAUSE WE'RE TALKING ABOUT COLLAPSING SPACE-TIME ACROSS THE MULTIVERSE--BUT WE'VE LEARNED A LOT ABOUT PREDICTING ***WHEN*** AN INCURSION'S GOING TO HAPPEN...
AND THERE APPEARS TO BE A SILVER LINING.
WHICH IS?
REED AND I THINK THAT WE'RE GOING TO MISS THEM ALL...
EXCEPT ONE.
THE LAST ONE.
AND THEN WHAT HAPPENS?
WE HAVE NO IDEA.
CAN I ASK YOU SOMETHING? AND I DON'T MEAN TO BE THIS WAY, BUT WHY HAVEN'T YOU ACTUALLY DONE ANYTHING?
AND I'M NOT TALKING ABOUT THEORY, OR RUNNING EXPERIMENTS IN A LAB... I'M TALKING ABOUT ACTUALLY ***DOING SOMETHING***.
WHILE SHE WAS OUR PRISONER, THE BLACK SWAN OUTLINED SOME POSSIBLE WAYS TO SURVIVE INCURSIONS. WE NARROWED THOSE DOWN TO WHAT WE CONSIDERED BOTH HUMANE AND ACHIEVABLE.
WE STARTED WITH A COSMIC CUBE.

"WE TRIED MAKING WORLDS-- A SERIES OF *EXODUS PLANETS.*
"OUR THINKING WAS, BLOW UP OUR OWN EARTH PREVENTING FURTHER INCURSIONS AND MOVE THE POPULATION TO EXODUS PRIME WHERE WE COULD CONDUCT OPERATIONS TO SAVE THE MULTIVERSE WITHOUT A 'TICKING CLOCK.'
"BUT ONE OF THE STARS WE PICKED--LIKE SO MANY ARE DOING NOW--EXPERIENCED AN EARLY DEATH.
"AND WE LOST THE CUBE.
"WE TRIED METAPHYSICAL APPROACHES--EVEN GETTING *GALACTUS* TO HELP ARRANGE AN AUDIENCE WITH *THE CELESTIALS*--BUT AFTER WHAT SEEMED TO BE PROGRESS IN GAINING THEIR ASSISTANCE...
"THEY ALL SIMPLY DISAPPEARED.


"THEN WE TRIED MULTIVERSAL SOLUTIONS...WHICH WAS *BEYOND* A DISASTER.
"I WOULDN'T WISH WHAT HAPPENED TO BRADDOCK ON ANYONE."


AND THERE WERE... OTHER ATTEMPTS.


"BUT THEY ALSO FAILED."

OVER THE PAST MONTHS WE *ALL* HAVE PAID.
BUT WHILE YOU WERE PLAYING *HERO,* WE WERE PLAYING *GOD.*
OUR COSTS WERE MUCH, MUCH HIGHER.
OKAY. BUT WHAT ABOUT *CAUSE*...
IF THERE AREN'T ANY SOLUTIONS...ARE YOU ANY CLOSER TO FIGURING OUT WHO--OR WHAT--IS BEHIND THIS?
WE TRIED QUITE A FEW--
HUH...

ISN'T THAT JUST LIKE THE UNIVERSE?
ONE LAST GASP...
HE'S BACK.
WHO'S BACK?
REED, WHO ARE YOU--
TONY AND I SENT SOMEONE OUT INTO THE MULTIVERSE TO FIND ANSWERS ALMOST EIGHT MONTHS AGO.
HE WAS ONLY SUPPOSED TO BE GONE A SHORT WHILE--WEEKS--SO I ASSUMED HE WAS LOST FOREVER.

BUT NOW HE'S RETURNED TO US.
REED...
HOME?
AM... I REALLY... REALLY *HOME?*

YES, HANK... YOU'RE HOME.
YOU MADE IT BACK.
BACK HOME. THANK GOD.
REED.
REED, I FOUND... I FOUND...
RABUM ALAL? YOU SUCCEEDED? YOU FOUND HIM?
THE GREAT DESTROYER?
NO. NOT THE DESTROYER.
THE... THE IVORY KINGS.
IVORY KINGS.
THE WHITE LORDS FROM WILD SPACE. FROM OUT THERE...
FROM BEYOND...

I FOUND...
...THE BEYONDERS.

“OVER THERE”

EARTH-1610. MANHATTAN. SIX MONTHS AGO.
THE TRISKELION. HEADQUARTERS OF S.H.I.E.L.D.
If you don't mind me asking, sir...
Why revisit *outdated notions?*
Don't get me wrong--while I'm too young to have ever experienced it myself--I understand the neurochemical payoff of nostalgia...
It just doesn't seem to make much sense when we're talking about antiquated strategies and institutions that died out a decade ago.

The world didn't pass *The Ultimates* by, Reed...
We just weren't prepared for what it was *becoming*. That we weren't ready cost a lot of good people their lives...
Righting the ship cost even more.
We've paid a lot over the years to get back to where we are.
You don't have to explain that to me, General Fury...
I understand perfectly well.
What I can't make sense of is *why I'm here.*
You started off in the Baxter "teen think tank" with an incredibly bright future, Reed. You even became a super hero.
Then you fell from grace. Created a self-aware future city that wiped out half of Europe.
Then came your recent resurrection. Back from the dark side on the side of the angels. Hell, son, if you think about it, you're the perfect person for the job.
What job?
Get in. I'll show you.
What is--
The Triskelion stations are just the start. I've got unlimited funds, U.N.-sponsored unilateral control, and the hunger that only a starving man can understand. I'm *rebuilding S.H.I.E.L.D.*, Reed...
And what I'm building is going to be *better*.

So why are you here?
You are here to help me. I want your *vision*, to make sure that what happened last time doesn't happen again.
I want you to think hard...
Every doomsday scenario that you can ponder, I wanna have a contingency plan for it.
Okay...
Why?
You tell *me*, Reed...
Ever get a feelin' there's someone out there who ain't gonna rest until they've brought the whole thing down around our ears?

EARTH-1610.
MILES BELOW MANHATTAN.
NOW.
Identify: Richards, Reed. Maker. Access granted.
How was your time away?
Some love the charade...
Putting on a lie while hiding the truth far beneath the surface. They love the game.
And you?
I hate it. A man dreams a millennium into the future, but wakes to this.
I am not an idea that can be erased on a whim. I *changed*... and there is no going back.
A status report, please.
You have three items that I have prioritized as [Response: Essential]...
In which order would you like them?
Sigh. Please start with the boring one.
Very well. The first item is actually more of an organization question, really...
It appears as if an ambitious S.H.I.E.L.D. programmer has taken it upon herself to create a hydra to sniff out emerging infant A.I.s on all three global networks we are currently observing.
Evasion is fairly simple at this point, but within six generations it will achieve contact.
What do we know about the programmer?

I have read her manifesto. Interestingly, her ideological curve is fear-based and will eventually trend antitechnology, Maker.
I would say that she'd quietly descend into Ludditism, erasing the hydra, but her work will be coopted by government intervention before that occurs.
Okay. Let's continue to observe for now.
What's next?
There is an incursion projected to occur in the next two days.
Of course.
How many worlds have I killed now, City?
Sixty-seven.
I'm getting too good at this.

Superior life forms adapt and survive...and none more than you.
You're the most advanced human in the history of your planet...it should be expected that you've also grown into its most proficient killer.
But if it's the repetition you tire of, you'll be interested in the final item I've prioritized.
Oh?
What's that?
I witnessed something through the Bridge today, Maker--something beyond our current understanding has occurred...
Yesterday there were hundreds of thousands of universes remaining in the multiverse.
Yes. And?
Today there are less than two dozen.
Well, you're right...
That *is* interesting.

UNIVERSE-616.
SHI'AR SPACE.
BEGIN PLAYBACK.
PAUSE AT THE APEX, PLEASE.
SHARRA AND K'YTHRI.
I NEED AN AUDIENCE WITH THE MAJESTOR. *IMMEDIATELY*.

ARE YOU SURE?
YES.
IT STARTED A YEAR AGO, BUT WITH THE BUILDER WAR AND WHAT FOLLOWED, WE FAILED TO NOTICE.
I FAILED TO NOTICE.
WHEN WE STARTED EXPERIENCING CELESTIAL EVENTS, OUR FIRST INSTINCTS WERE THAT IT WAS RANDOM PHENOMENA...
THEN WHEN THEY CONTINUED, THE ENTIRETY OF OUR SCIENCE GUILD, ALONG WITH THEIR THINKING MACHINES, FOCUSED MAINLY ON POSSIBLE NEFARIOUS ACTIONS. WE FAILED TO THINK BROADLY ENOUGH, MAJESTOR...
UNTIL EARLIER TODAY.
AND NOW WE KNOW...AND KNOW THAT WE KNOW TOO LATE.
I FAILED YOU, AND NOW THE EMPIRE IS LOST.
PREPARE SOMETHING I CAN SHARE WITH THE COUNCIL...
AND WE ARE NOT DONE *YET*, MENTOR. WE ARE *SHI'AR*.
WE FIGHT TO THE VERY END.

LATER.
HONOR IS A FRAGILE THING IN TIMES OF WAR.
LESS THAN ONE STANDARD YEAR AGO, WE SET ASIDE THE DESIRES OF OUR INDIVIDUAL EMPIRES TO STAND TOGETHER AGAINST THE BUILDER THREAT.
VICTORY WAS COSTLY, BUT A PRICE WE WOULD READILY PAY AGAIN TO AVOID THE FALL OF OUR PEOPLES.
ONE OF OUR DEBTS--PERHAPS THE MOST IMPORTANT ONE--IS OWED TO THE HUMANS WHO PROVED TO BE THE CATALYST FOR OUR TRIUMPH--THE AVENGERS.
MY FELLOW WARRIORS, WE MUST WAR AGAIN. ONE LAST TIME.
AND IT SEEMS THAT THE DEBT OWED TO THEM WILL BE ONE FOREVER UNPAID...
AS IT IS EARTH WE MUST DESTROY.

EARTH-1610.
City, can you please confirm that we are at the incursion location?
Yes, Maker. Confirmed.
Incursion in three minutes.
Maker?
Yes?
Before the incursion wall prevents communication, I'd like to make a query.
Go ahead.
Why haven't you re-engineered the Children to assist you in saving your world?
I've calculated multiple scenarios in which their existence presents a probability storm of favorable outcomes.

All things in time, City.
Besides...
What father--upon losing a child--responds to that grief by attempting to re-create what's been lost?
No. This world is simply not yet worthy of our shining city full of perfect children.
Soon, though...
Ah!
Blue.

YOU...YOU *DARE?*
YOU DARE TO THINK YOU COULD KILL ME WITH A *KNIFE?*
NO. I JUST PUT THE BLADE WHERE IT WAS SUPPOSED TO GO.
THAT'S NOT WHAT'S GOING TO KILL YOU.
OH! BLACK BOLT. WHAT ARE--
FAREWELL!

THAT WAS NAMOR.
I SAW HIM LEAVE--FLY OFF--IN THE MIDDLE OF THE FIGHT.
HE FLED?
I DID NOT SAY THAT, TERRAX--I DON'T KNOW. I LOST SIGHT OF--
OF COURSE HE RAN. HE'S BEEN WAITING HIS ENTIRE LIFE FOR THE RIGHT MOMENT.
HE'S A *RUNNER*.
I COULD *ASK HIM*, MY LORD.
IF YOU WISH IT.

YES, CORVUS.
ASK.
THAT WAS NO SMALL FALL, ATLANTEAN...BUT I HAVE SEEN YOU SUFFER MUCH WORSE WITHOUT SCAR.
WHY THEN DO I SMELL BLOOD ON YOU, NAMOR?
WHAT HAPPENED WHEN YOU *RAN?*
I...I... DON'T RUN...
AND I DON'T ANSWER TO YOU.
THEN ANSWER TO ME.
I...
I...I SAW...

I SAW SOMETHING. IN THE SKY. *THERE.*
SO I WENT TO CHECK WHAT IT WAS...
AND NOW I KNOW.
IT'S SOME KIND OF SHIELD GENERATOR. IMPENETRABLE. THAT'S WHY I FELL...INJURED. I...I TRIED TO BREAK THROUGH IT AND COULD NOT.
IT MUST BE THE WORK OF T'CHALLA, RICHARDS AND THE OTHERS. THEY HAVE TRAPPED US HERE, AND WE ARE MEANT TO DIE ALONG WITH THIS WORLD.
MY AX CAN CLEAVE *ATOMS*--I WILL CUT THROUGH THIS SHIELD.
NO. THIS IS A TRAP. ONE WELL CONSTRUCTED.
BRUTE STRENGTH HAS NEVER DEFEATED REAL FORESIGHT...THIS WILL DEMAND SOMETHING MORE. AT LEAST WE HAVE A WINDOW.
EXACTLY HOW MUCH TIME DO WE HAVE UNTIL THE WORLDS COLLIDE, NAMOR?
IT DOESN'T MATTER! THEY *BUILT* THE ANTI-MATTER BOMBS...
I KNOW THEY CAN DETONATE THEM WHENEVER THEY WISH. SO WE DON'T HA--

GODS. WHAT IS THIS?
06:52:12
07:18:07
SIMTUM. TAPPUTU. A GIFT FROM *RABUM ALAL.*
A *SECOND INCURSION* IS OCCURRING ON THIS WORLD.
THEN IF WE CAN GET THERE...THAT'S OUR WAY OUT.
THEN WE FIND A WAY BACK TO OUR EARTH AND PULL THE SKIN FROM THEIR COWARDLY BONES.
FOUND IT.
IT'S FAR. SIXTEEN HUNDRED KILOMETERS.
WE HAVE TO HURRY.
"I KNOW THAT LOOK. YOU'RE WONDERING...
"WHAT AM I *WAITING* FOR?

"I WANT NAMOR COMPLETELY AWARE OF WHAT IS ABOUT TO HAPPEN TO HIM.
"SO WE WILL SPARE HIM A FEW MINUTES.
"BECAUSE I WANT HIM TO KNOW--REALLY KNOW--*IT'S OVER.*
"TO FULLY REALIZE THERE'S NO FORGIVENESS FOR WHAT HE'S DONE.
"THAT THERE IS A PRICE AND HE'S FINALLY GOING TO PAY IT--THAT THERE'S NO MERCY FOR MEN LIKE HIM, AND EVEN IF THERE WAS, HE DOESN'T GET ANY.
"I WANT HIM TO KNOW THIS IS HOW IT ENDS.
"AND MORE THAN THAT...

"I WANT HIM TO KNOW...IT WAS ME."
BRAKOOOM

KRAA-SPPPLLLLAASHH
SOON, SWEET MISTRESS...
BUT NOT YET.
IT...IT WORKED.
YES.
BUT WHAT... WHAT EARTH IS THIS, AND DOES IT PROFIT US TO BE HERE?
CALL ME FOOLISH...
BUT I THINK WE SHOULD ASK HIM.

Well...
Isn't this fascinating.

“BEYONDERS”

NECROPOLIS.
WAKANDA.
"THE IVORY KINGS."
THE WHITE LORDS FROM WILD SPACE.
FROM OUT THERE...
FROM BEYOND...

BEYONDERS.
ARE YOU SURE THAT'S WHAT YOU FOUND OUT THERE, HANK?
SPOTTY AS THEY ARE, THIS DOESN'T LOOK ANYTHING AT ALL LIKE THE "BEYONDER" THAT WE HAVE ENCOUNTERED BEFORE...
AND THERE'S MORE THAN ONE.
YES... *MORE.*
DRILL DEEP ENOUGH INTO ANY PROBLEM AND YOU'LL FIND BOTH SIMPLICITY AND ELEGANCE. IDEAS ARE LIKE THAT AT THE CORE.
OF COURSE... OF ***COURSE*** THERE ARE... ***MORE.***
ARE WE SURE WE SHOULD BE DOING THIS NOW? I THINK DOCTOR PYM MIGHT NEED TO REST BEF--

DON'T TRY AND HANDLE ME, SON...I CAN HEAR WHAT I SOUND LIKE.
BROKEN DOESN'T MEAN BENT, UNDERSTAND?
SHOW THEM, REED. THE DATA'S ALL RECORDED ON THE CRYSTAL I GAVE YOU.
SHOW THEM....
SEE? UNIVERSALLY ADAPTIVE. HARMONICALLY TRANSITIONAL.
THESE... THINGS CANNOT BE FULLY COMPREHENDED IN A HUMAN FASHION. I COULD TALK ABOUT SCALE, PERHAPS... THE SIZE OF IT...
I COULD TELL YOU ABOUT THE **CHILD UNIT** FROM THE **SECRET WARS**. VISUALLY MODIFIED TO MIMIC WHAT IT PERCEIVED...
IT CRUNCHED A **UNIVERSE** TO MAKE A TOY...BUT THESE THINGS CRUNCH **UNIVERSES** AND ARE MOST CERTAINLY NOT PLAYING A GAME.
REED AND TONY SENT ME TO FIND RABUM ALAL, BUT I FOUND SOMETHING WORSE. WHITE LORDS OF WILD SPACE, QUESTING FOR THE LAST LIGHT...
DO YOU UNDERSTAND IT NOW?
NOT ONE BIT, HANK.
START AT THE BEGINNING.

"OKAY. WELL, TO START WITH, THE PROBLEM OF FINDING WHAT I WAS LOOKING FOR WAS TWOFOLD.
"THE FIRST QUESTION I HAD TO ANSWER WAS HOW TO NAVIGATE THE MULTIVERSE.
"REED HAD THEORETICAL IDEAS AND SOME PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE, BUT DIVING THROUGH STACKED UNIVERSES LACKING A TRUE NORTH MAKES IT EASY TO GET LOST.
"INFINITE UNIVERSES MEANS INFINITE TIME, AND TIME WASN'T SOMETHING WE HAD.
"BUT IF YOU GET SMALL ENOUGH, YOU CAN DECIPHER THE STRANGE INTERACTIONS THAT OCCUR IN THE RAZOR-THIN SUBATOMIC SPACES THAT SEPARATE UNIVERSES.
"ROTATING PARTICLES DISAPPEAR AND REAPPEAR AND, FOR THE LONGEST TIME, NO ONE KNEW WHERE THEY WOULD GO, BUT I'LL TELL YOU:
"THEY TRADE PLACES WITH LIKE KIND. CONSTANTLY. SOMETHING AKIN TO AN ESCALATOR MOVING THROUGH REALITIES.
"SO NOW I COULD FIND MY WAY. I HAD MY TRUE NORTH.
"AS FOR THE ANSWER TO MY SECOND QUESTION--
"HOW DO I KNOW WHAT I'M LOOKING FOR...
"WITH THAT ONE, I HAD SOME HELP.

"IT TOOK ME ONE HUNDRED AND SIXTY-THREE DAYS OF TRAVELING FROM DOOMED TO DYING WORLDS...
"BUT I EVENTUALLY FOUND MY WAY TO THE SUPERSTATION OF REFUGEE *BUILDERS* FROM HUNDREDS OF DEAD UNIVERSES.

"THE PAN-UNIVERSAL ALEPHS, REDESIGNED AND REBUILT BY THE BUILDERS TO HIVE-MIND DATA FROM THOUSANDS OF UNITS, EACH ACTING AS A MULTIVERSAL BUOY.
"TRAWLING THE ENDLESS SEA OF SPACE AND TIME, LOOKING TO SNAG A CELESTIAL CLUE IN THEIR NET.
"I HITCHED A RIDE ON A REPORTING UNIT."
OBJECTIVE: TIME-SENSITIVE.
GOAL: SOURCE-SEEKING.
GOAL: ACHIEVED.
IS THAT SO?
ACTION: UPLOADING COORDINATES.
THAT WOULD BE WONDERFUL NEWS...
AS I GROW TIRED OF THIS SEARCHING AND AM EAGER TO CREATE THEIR UNCREATION.
MASTERS! THIS ALEPH SAYS THE HIVE HAS FOUND A SOURCE POINT.
AH! FINALLY.
RECALL ALL UNITS AND PREPARE THE SUPERSTATION FOR TRANSIT.

THE DATA SHOWS THE COORDINATES ARE FAR BEYOND ANY PREVIOUS JUMP.
WITH A WINDOW THIS SLIGHT, PERHAPS WE SHOULD--
I CAN MAKE IT.
THE *NEED* IS THERE...
SO I CAN MAKE THE JUMP.
WHAT?!
THERE WAS ANOTHER MANIFOLD? AND WHAT DID HE MEAN BY, "THE *NEED* IS THERE"?
ACCORDING TO WHAT I COULD FOLLOW FROM THE BUILDERS, ALL MANIFOLDS ARE PRIMAL MOVERS. TELEPORTERS WITH THE BASE ABILITY TO MOVE FROM POINT A TO POINT B...
BUT THEIR REAL VALUE IS IN THE HIGHER END OF THEIR POWER SET--THEY CAN MOVE THINGS ALMOST UNCONSCIOUSLY...
VARIABLE THINGS TO VARIABLE PLACES SOLELY BY *NEED*. THEY SOMEHOW *KNOW* WHERE THINGS ARE SUPPOSED TO GO.
I HAD NO IDEA...BUT THAT EXPLAINS SO...
WAIT. FROM EVERYTHING ELSE I'VE LEARNED, OUR POWER ONLY WORKS IN OUR NATIVE UNIVERSE.
THE BUILDERS BUILT A NEW KIND OF MANIFOLD...
CULTIVATED AND GENETICALLY ENGINEERED FROM HUNDREDS OF... SAMPLES.
THIS ONE COULD TRAVERSE THE MULTIVERSE.
SO... A SCIENCE EXPERIMENT.

"YES. AND A SUCCESSFUL ONE AT THAT.
"THE MANIFOLD MOVED THE SUPERSTATION TO THE COORDINATES.
"AN INCURSION POINT WHERE THE SIDERA MARIS HAD SUMMONED MAPMAKERS.
"A MOMENTARY NEXUS OF REAL AND WILD SPACE...

"I WATCHED FROM THE SUPERSTATION AS ONE THOUSAND NIHILII JOINED WITH TEN THOUSAND ALEPHS TO PIERCE THE NEXUS AND DESTROY THE BULK OF THE MAPMAKERS AND THEIR SIDERA MARIS SLAVES.
"I WATCHED AS THEY SALVAGED A MAPMAKER CORE AND CRACKED THE HARMONIC STRUCTURE OF WILD SPACE.
"I WATCHED AS THEY DISCOVERED THE LOCATION OF THE IVORY KINGS THEMSELVES, AND THE MANUFACTURED MANIFOLD MADE THE JUMP."
THERE. THAT'S WHERE WE *NEED* TO GO.
I CAN FEEL IT.

AND IT WAS HIS LAST...
IT'S NOT MADNESS TO LOOK AT THINGS HIDDEN AND BELIEVE THEY SHOULDN'T BE FOUND.
WHAT DO YOU MEAN, HANK?
HE'S SAYING THAT IF YOU TRULY WANT TO KEEP SOMETHING A SECRET, YOU DON'T DIG A SHALLOW GRAVE...
YOU BURY IT DEEP.
BRIAN. GOOD.
YOU'RE HERE.
YES. I CAME AS SOON AS SOON AS YOU SIGNALED HIS RETURN.
DO YOU UNDERSTAND WHAT HANK'S TALKING ABOUT?
HE'S SAYING THERE'S A REASON THAT AT ROUGHLY THE SAME TIME, EVERY SINGLE BEING CONNECTED TO THESE IVORY KINGS STARTED SHARING THE SAME FREQUENCY...
IT MADE IT EASIER TO FIND THEM IF YOU WERE REALLY LOOKING.

HE'S SAYING IT WAS A TRAP.
"FOUR MONTHS AGO, THE CAPTAIN BRITAIN CORPS BEGAN ACTIVELY INVESTIGATING THE COLLAPSE.
"WE KNEW SOMETHING WAS WRONG BEFORE THEN, BUT IT TOOK THE LOSS OF OVER TWENTY CORPSMEN IN A SINGLE WEEK TO TRULY GALVANIZE OUR EFFORTS.
"EVENTUALLY, WE CAPTURED A MAPMAKER AS WELL, BUT INSTEAD OF FOLLOWING THE HARMONICS, SATURNYNE HAD US CONSTRUCT A BEACON.
"THE IVORY KINGS SENT EVERYONE. THE STARLIGHT CITADEL WAS OVERRUN AND THE CORPS WAS DESTROYED IN A MATTER OF HOURS.
"I SHOULD HAVE DIED THERE, BUT AFTER EMBEDDING ME WITH THE CITADEL'S SECRETS, SATURNYNE CAST ME OUT...
"RETURNING ME TO THIS EARTH."

WE NEVER EVEN GLIMPSED AN IVORY KING OR WHATEVER IS BEHIND THIS. BUT MAKE NO MISTAKE, THESE THINGS ARE PREDATORS OF THE HIGHEST ORDER.
AND THEY WON'T STOP UNTIL THEY HAVE US IN THEIR MOUTHS.
OH, IT'S GRIMMER THAN THAT.
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
WHILE I WAS OUT THERE WATCHING, THERE WAS A QUESTION RATTLING AROUND IN MY MIND.
I COULDN'T LET IT GO...
"IF THE BEYONDERS WERE SO POWERFUL--NOT CONSTRAINED BY SPACE, OR ENERGY, OR ANYTHING WITHIN REASON--AND IF THEY WANTED US DEAD...
"WHY HAD THEY NOT SIMPLY FINISHED OFF ALL OF US A LONG TIME AGO? WHAT WAS STOPPING THEM?
"WELL, IT TURNS OUT THE ANSWER WAS WORSE THAN THE QUESTION.

"THAT BAITED TRAP WE FOUND WASN'T MEANT FOR US AT ALL. THEY WERE AFTER BIGGER FISH.
"AND AS FOR WHY IT WAS TAKING AS LONG AS IT DID?
"TURNS OUT IT TAKES A GOOD BIT OF TIME TO KILL AN ENDLESS NUMBER OF GODS.

"WE JUMPED INTO THE NEXUS OF REAL AND WILD SPACE JUST IN TIME TO WATCH A SINGLE BEYONDER CONFRONTING THE LAST CELESTIALS OF THE UNIVERSE WE WERE CURRENTLY IN.
"BUT THE NEXUS WAS THIN SPACE.
"AND AS THEY BATTLED, WHAT DIVIDES ONE REALITY FROM THE NEXT BEGAN TO FADE."

AND LIKE BLURRED, OVERLAPPING VISION, I COULD SEE THE SAME BATTLE TAKING PLACE IN MULTIPLE REALITIES.
"IN EACH ONE, A DIFFERENT BEYONDER FACING...AND *DESTROYING*...THE CELESTIAL HOST."
THAT EXPLAINS WHAT HAPPENED TO THEM. WHY THEY DISAPPEARED... AND STOPPED MEETING US...
YES. BUT THE ONLY CONCERN WITH THAT IS WE KNOW THAT THERE ARE THINGS A GOOD DEAL MORE POWERFUL THAN THE CELESTIALS ROAMING THE COSMOS.
TELL US WHAT ELSE YOU SAW, HANK.

THAT'S THE PROBLEM, T'CHALLA...
AT SOME POINT, THE MIND... THE MIND BECOMES INCAPABLE OF FULLY UNDERSTANDING WHAT IT'S OBSERVING...
"I WAITED... DRIFTING IN SPACE...
"AMONG THE LIFELESS BODIES OF THE BUILDERS SUSPENDED IN A ZERO-GRAVITY GRAVE...
"LIKE DROWNED ANTS FLOATING IN WATER.
"AND THEN I SAW...
"I'M NOT SURE *SAW* IS EVEN THE RIGHT WORD...
"BUT I SAW WHAT FOLLOWED...

"AND THAT ONE GLIMPSE CAUSED ME TO LET GO OF THE LOOSE GRIP I HAD ON MY REMAINING SANITY.
"I WENT MAD. LOST IN THE FIREWORKS OF UNIVERSAL GENOCIDE.

"AND I ONLY FOUND MY WAY BACK WHEN ETERNITY FRACTURED.
"SPACE FLATTENED BACK OUT.
"PERCEPTION BECAME POSSIBLE AGAIN.
"THE BEYONDERS TURNED, SOMETHING CATCHING THEIR ATTENTION.
"AND THEN I SAW...
"...WHAT THEY SAW.

"ALL OF REALITY-- THE *MULTIVERSE*-- TAKEN FORM.
"THEY BATTLED. THEY RAGED.
"THE SAME FIGHT TAKING PLACE ACROSS ALL REALITIES AT THE SAME TIME.
"AND WHEN THE LIVING TRIBUNAL LIVED NO MORE, IT FELL FROM THE HEAVENS...

"AND LANDED ON A ROCK. ONE SLIVER EACH...FOR EACH REALITY.
"THEN I *RAN*, REED.
"I RAN AS HARD AND FAST AS I COULD. I RAN HERE TO TELL YOU..."
...IT'S *OVER*, MY FRIEND. DONE.
THE GODS SPENT BILLIONS OF YEARS TO BUILD SOMETHING... ALL OF THE MULTIVERSE...
AND THESE THINGS DESTROYED IT ON A WHIM.
WHAT HOPE DOES MAN HAVE NOW?

“IT ALL COMES CRASHING DOWN”

FOUR DAYS AGO.
THE MOON.
TONY'S ARCHIVES MARKED *THIS* AS THE PLACE WHERE WE COULD FIND IT, BUT NOTHING IS REGISTERING ON MY--
NO. IT'S HERE. I KNOW IT IS.
I SAW IT FALL.
MAYBE OVER THE NEXT RIDGE.
THERE!
THERE IT IS.
BRADDOCK, THIS IS CHO... WE FOUND THE SITE.
YOU GUYS ARE GOOD TO GO.

OKAY. WE'RE CLEAR TO JUMP...
BUT DO YOU UNDERSTAND WHY WE'RE PLAYING *BRING OUT YOUR DEAD?*
THERE HAS TO BE A BETTER WAY TO DO THIS.
MOST PROBLEMS HAVE MULTIPLE SOLUTIONS, CAPTAIN. THAT'S TRUE.
TIME, HOWEVER, DOES A GOOD JOB OF LIMITING OPTIONS.
SO IF WHAT YOU NEED IS A MATERIAL THAT CAN WITHSTAND THE RIGORS OF COLLAPSING MULTIVERSAL SPACE...
AND YOU LACK THE TIME TO FABRICATE IT...
THEN YOU USE WHAT NATURE PROVIDES.
EVEN IF IT'S THE SKIN OFF THE CARCASS OF A DEAD GOD.

THREE DAYS AGO.
NATION X.
HERE AT THE END OF DAYS, IT SEEMS WE'VE ALL BECOME SOMETHING NEW.
I'VE SPENT A GOOD PORTION OF MY LIFE BEING HUNTED BY SENTINELS, BUT NOW THESE WATCH OVER ME.
DO YOU KNOW WHY THAT IS?
I GAVE THEM A NEW PURPOSE.
THAT'S AWESOME, SIR. IT REALLY IS.
I'D EVEN SAY IT'S IMPRESSIVE, BUT THEN AGAIN, I'VE ALWAYS FELT THAT WAY ABOUT MOST EVERYTHING YOU DO.
IT'S TIME FOR YOU TO IMPRESS US ALL, CYCLOPS.

OH...WE BOTH KNOW THAT'S NOT GOING TO BE A PROBLEM, DON'T WE, ROBERTO?
THE LAST TIME YOU WERE HERE, I TOLD YOU I THOUGHT IT WAS PAST TIME I GOT IN THE GAME.
IT'S CLEAR TO ME NOW THAT YOU FAILED TO UNDERSTAND WHAT THAT MEANS...
SINCE NOW YOU WANT ME TO RUN OFF AND PLAY HERO TO MANKIND ONCE AGAIN.
IT AIN'T AN UNREASONABLE REQUEST, SCOTT.
I DON'T THINK SO EITHER.
ISN'T SAVING THE DAY WHAT WE'RE SUPPOSED TO DO?
I SPENT A GOOD PORTION OF MY LIFE BELIEVING THAT, BUT NOW I DON'T.
I SEE THINGS... MORE CLEARLY NOW.
AS THE GAME, ROBERTO, IS *RESURRECTION...*
AND IT IS WELL UNDERWAY.

TWO DAYS AGO.
THE BAXTER BUILDING.
AFTER ALL WE'VE BEEN THROUGH...THE HIGH COSTS THAT HAVE BEEN PAID...
AND THIS WAS THE BEST I COULD DO.
FLEXIBLE CORE. MULTIPLE DRIVES. REDUNDANT SHIELDS... IT'S A FANTASTIC DESIGN, T'CHALLA.
CONSTRUCTION COMES WITH CERTAIN COMPLICATIONS, BUT WE'LL GET IT DONE.
I SIMPLY SOLVED THE PROBLEM YOU PUT IN FRONT OF ME, REED. I FIGURED OUT *HOW NOT TO LOSE.*
WELL, MY FRIEND...YOU KNOW HOW I CAN'T STAND TAKING CREDIT FOR OTHER PEOPLE'S IDEAS.
AND THIS ONE WASN'T MINE AT ALL...
IT WAS *HERS.*

ANY OTHER CHILD BUT YOURS, REED...
EITHER WAY, LET US HOPE NOT LOSING WILL BE ENOUGH.
ICE CRE
IT WILL BE. BUT, YOU KNOW, SOLVE ONE PROBLEM AND ANOTHER POPS UP...
SO THE ONE YOU SHOULD BE FOCUSED ON ISN'T WHETHER OR NOT THE PLAN IS GOING TO WORK...IT'S WHAT HAPPENS WHEN IT *DOES.*
WHO ARE YOU GONNA TAKE... AND WHO GETS LEFT BEHIND?
...
IS THERE A CHOICE, REALLY? IT'S A LIFEBOAT. HYPOTHETICALLY, YOU HAVE TO TREAT IT LIKE ONE, DON'T YOU?
IN EVERY SENSE OF THE WORD.
AND SPACE IS LIMITED, SO MULTIDISCIPLINED CANDIDATES SHOULD TAKE PRIORITY OVER HIGHLY SPECIALIZED ONES.
4
YES. EXCEPT MAYBE A FEW GENETICISTS.
WE DON'T WANT TO BE LIMITED BY THINGS LIKE BREEDING PAIRS WHEN RESTARTING HUMANITY, SO THEY--AND MATERIAL NEEDS--SHOULD TAKE PREFERENCE.
ARE WE REALLY DOING THIS?
WHAT CHOICE DO WE HAVE, REED?
WE FAILED TO SAVE OUR WORLD...*ALL* THE WORLDS...
AT THE VERY LEAST WE HAVE TO SAVE OUR *SPECIES.*

ONE DAY AGO. NEW YORK CITY.
I KNOW THERE'S SOME KIND OF PROTOCOL ABOUT HOW YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO TALK TO THE PARENTS OF LITTLE KIDS. LIKE TO AVOID HURT FEELINGS AND SUCH, BUT, DUDE...
YOUR DEMON BABY IS STUCK ON THE CEILING.
BABABABA
I WISH I COULD, BOBBY, BUT I CAN'T TAKE CREDIT...
HE IS HIS MOTHER'S CHILD.
BZZZTTT
HUH?
SAM...I'M GETTING LONG DISTANCE FROM THE EMPIRE. DON'T LET THE BABY FALL OFF THE CEILING.
I'LL BE RIGHT BACK.

ALL RIGHT.
GO, GO, EXOSPECS.
HRRNNNN
OH!
GREETINGS, GUARDSMAN.
I WAS NOT EXPECTING A CALL FROM YOU, MAJESTOR. YOU HONOR ME...

HOW CAN I SERVE YOU?
YOU DO SERVE ME, SMASHER.
WELL...AND WITH NO SMALL MEASURE OF DISTINCTION.
BEFORE I WAS MAJESTOR, I WAS PRAETOR OF THE IMPERIAL GUARD. I WAS A WARRIOR BEFORE I WAS AN EMPEROR.
ANY PRESTIGE I HAD, I EARNED ON THE FIELD OF BATTLE. AS SUCH, I VALUE SUCH KINDRED SOULS.
MAJESTOR, I DON'T UNDERST--
I AM RECALLING YOU TO SERVE, SUPERGUARDIAN. READY YOUR FAMILY AND REPORT TO THE FLAGSHIP, LILANDRA.
I WILL BE WAITING FOR YOU THERE.
MAJESTOR, NO...I...I...
IT'S SO FAR, AND I NEED MORE TIME TO--
TIME...IS SOMETHING NONE OF US HAVE, SUPERGUARDIAN.
UNDERSTAND...
YOU ARE EXPECTED...AND THE DISTANCE BETWEEN US IS MUCH SMALLER THAN YOU BELIEVE.

EARTH-1610.
THE CITY.
I'VE GIVEN YOU AN ENTIRE DAY, NAMOR.
I THOUGHT YOU MIGHT NEED IT, AS I WANTED YOU TO WORK THROUGH ALL THE VARIOUS LIES YOU MIGHT TELL...
AND DISCOVER HOW POINTLESS IT WOULD BE TO UTTER THEM. HOW THEY END IN REGRET, AND FALL SHORT OF WHAT GOOD THE TRUTH MIGHT DO YOU.
SO I GAVE YOU A DAY.
IS IT JUST ME, OR DOES THIS FEEL LIKE YOU'RE LEADING UP TO SOMETHING?
WE HAD A DEAL.
YES. WE DID.
AND THEN I THOUGHT I COULD MAKE A BETTER ONE.
BUT IT SEEMS WE WERE BOTH WRONG.

AND ARE WE ALL DONE WITH THAT NOW?
OH... VERY MUCH SO.
I INTEND TO MAKE IT THROUGH THIS. I NEED TO LIVE.
I WILL LIVE.
I AM DONE WITH ANYTHING OTHER THAN FORWARD MOTION.
GODS PITY THE WORLDS THAT STAND IN MY WAY.

THE OUTER SOLAR SYSTEM.
THE WARSHIP LILANDRA.
I BEAR THIS BURDEN POORLY AS WELL, ORACLE. BUT THE RELENTLESS SUCKING MAW OF URGENCY NEUTERS ALL PITY. SO IF YOU HAVE A FINAL CASE TO MAKE...
I WOULD HEAR IT NOW.
THEN HEAR ME CLEARLY, MAJESTOR.
WE *CANNOT* DO THIS...
THESE ARE OUR ALLIES--NOT OUR ENEMIES. HOW CAN YOU FORGET THAT THEY RECENTLY SAVED US ALL?
UPON HONOR WE BUILT ALL THAT WE ARE. WHAT ARE WE SHI'AR IN THE FACE OF LOSING IT?

MENTOR... ORACLE APPEALS TO OUR IMPERIAL HONOR.
IT DOES NOT FALL ON DEAF EARS.
THE RECORD IS CLEAR. I HAVE NOT HIDDEN IT.
THE FAULT OF ALL THIS IS MINE...I MISSED THE SIGNS AND THEN I LEARNED TOO LATE WHAT THEY MEANT.
THE DISHONOR-- THE SHAME--FALLS TO ME. BUT THAT FAILING HAS LEFT US NO OTHER CHOICE.
THE PLANET MUST BE DESTROYED... AND WHEN IT IS ASH AND WE HAVE SAVED WHAT WE HAVE BUILT, THEN I WILL PAY WHAT I OWE AND FALL ON MY SWORD...
IT WILL BE...AN HONOR.
THAT KIND OF BLINDING NOBILITY SERVES ONLY THE BLIND.
THIS IS WRONG. WE CANNOT-- WE MUST NOT-- *DESTROY THE EARTH.*
I KNOW YOU, GLADIATOR. I HAVE KNOWN YOU SINCE LONG BEFORE YOU WERE MAJESTOR... AND YOU WILL NOT DO THIS...
YOU ARE TOO GOOD A MAN.

WHO I AM....IS BOUND BY *WHAT* I AM.
I AM AN *EMPIRE.*
AND THAT EMPIRE MUST STAND AT ANY COST.
VESSELS ARRIVING IN SYSTEM.
MULTIPLE VECTORS.
AND NOW, IT SEEMS, WE ARE DONE WITH THE FANTASY OF IDYLLIC ENDINGS...

"FOR THE MACHINES OF WAR HAVE ASSEMBLED."

I'M NOT HEARING ANYTHING BUT STATIC.
STILL NOTHING BUT STATIC.
LEMME CHECK AGAIN. MAYBE THIS TIME...*NOPE.* STATIC.
HOW ABOUT YOU, GAMORA?
IT'S SO *WEIRD* BECAUSE ROCKET SAID-- *EMPHATICALLY*-- THAT HE COULD--
I ALSO HEAR ONLY STATIC, PETER QUILL.
ALL RIGHT, SHUT UP ALREADY!
ANYONE *ELSE* ON THIS SHIP ABLE TO PATCH INTO THE ENCRYPTED SECURITY NETWORK OF NOT ONE BUT *FIVE* GALACTIC EMPIRES? OF COURSE NOT.
BUT AM I APPRECIATED? *NOOOOO.*
I AM CONFUSED BY THIS ERRATIC AND DESTRUCTIVE BEHAVIOR. IF YOU WANT TO *DESTROY* THIS MACHINE YOU SHOULD USE A BIGGER--
OKAY! TRY IT NOW!

--ADVISED THAT THE STRIKE WINDOW WILL OPEN IN FOURTEEN CYCLES. ALL SHIPS ARE ADVISED TO PROCEED UNDER MAXIMUM BURN TO THE SECONDARY STAGING AREA SURROUNDING THE WORLD. PLANETCIDE PROTOCOLS ENACTED.
THAT AIN'T GOOD.
ILL INTENT IS ONE THING. OVERWHELMING FORCE A SECOND.
BUT THE *TREACHERY* OF THIS... SNEAK ATTACK. LOATHSOME.
WELL, I GUESS WE KNOW WHAT WE NEED TO DO THEN, DON'T WE?
I AM GROOT.
WARN EARTH? *WARN EARTH?*
ABSOLUTELY FREAKING NOT!
IT'S LIKE THERE'S A GIANT SIGN SAYING: *STAY AWAY!* THE HOUSE IS ON FIRE--FIRE, UNDERSTAND?
FIRE.
AND DO YOU KNOW WHAT THEY CALL PEOPLE WHO RUN TOWARDS FIRE INSTEAD OF *AWAY* FROM IT?
I'LL TELL YOU...

IDIOTS.
THAT'S WHAT YOU ARE. A BUNCH OF STUPID, FREAKING IDIOTS.
WE RISK OUR TAILS TO COME HERE AND TELL YOU TO GET THE HELL OFF YOUR PLANET BECAUSE SOMEONE'S COMING TO SMASH IT INTO BITS, AND WHAT DO YOU PEOPLE SAY?
"NO, THANK YOU, WE'RE GOING DOWN WITH THE SHIP."
YOU KNOW WHO GOES DOWN WITH THE SHIP?

"IDIOTS."

“RABUM ALAL”

EARTH-1903990.
THERE IIIIIIT IIIIIIS.
A DOOR.
A DOOR TO OTHER WORLDS.

HURRY. HURRY...
SUMMON THE EYE...TELL HIIIIIM WHAT WE HAVE SEEN.
AH!
EYE OF EYES. LOOK!
A SCOUT RETURNS, AND IIIIT APPEARS WE HAVE SEEN A GLORIIIIOUS THIIIIING.
TOO MANY CLOUDS OF LATE. TOO FEW RAYS OF HOPE...
I AM UNABLE TO FULLY COMPREHEND THE HIVE MIND OF THE PRIESTHOOD, SO FORGIVE ME IF I RESERVE JUDGMENT REGARDING....

GREAT EYE...
WE HAVE FOUND A DOOR TO THE LIIIIIBRARY OF WORLDS.
UNMARKED?
UNGUARDED?
NO.
THREE BLACK SIIIIISTERS STAND WATCH.
DAMN.
AND HOW LONG DO WE HAVE UNTIL THIS EARTH COLLIDES WITH--
THIIIIS WORLD WIIIIILL UNDERGO IIIIITS IIIIIINCURSIIIIION IIIIN LESS THAN ONE UNIIIIT OF STANDARD CELESTIIIIIAL TIIIIIME.
THEN WE DON'T HAVE A CHOICE, DO WE?
SEND EVERYONE...
"TAKE THE DOOR."
AAIIIIIIIEE!
BLACK PRIESTS!
SISTER! JUST LIKE OLD TIMES...
THEY'VE COME FOR THE DOOR.

NO! NEVER BEFORE LIKE THIS...
THEY'VE SENT TOO MANY-- POSSIBLY ALL.
GO! SEAL THE DOOR!
"I WILL HOLD THEM BACK AS LONG AS I CAN."
HURRY, SISTER! HURR--
AAIIIEEE!
THOOOOOOMM!

TOO LATE.
LOCKED AND SEALED UP TIIIIGHT.
WE TARRIIIIED, EYE OF EYES... WE WERE TOO SLOW.
A LOCKED DOOR ISN'T MY CONCERN...
I'M WORRIED THAT ONE OF THEM ESCAPED.
WE ARE MANY. THEY ARE FEW.
OVER THE YEARS, I'VE LEARNED ANY JOURNEY INTO AN UNKNOWN REALM IS FULL OF PERIL.
AND NO PRIEST HAS EVER SET FOOT INSIDE THE LIBRARY DOOR...
I WOULD RATHER THEY NOT KNOW WE ARE COMING.
STILL, ALL THE OTHER WORLDS OUR ORDER HAD MARKED OVER THE YEARS AS HAVING DOORS TO THE LIBRARY HAVE BEEN LOST TO INCURSIONS...
JUST LIKE THIS ONE SOON WILL BE. SO, ABOUT THAT LOCKED DOOR?
YES, EYE...
GOOD FORTUNE TO HAVE A KEY.

PSSSHHHH!
SO MANY DOORS...
SO MANY PATHS FROM WHIIIICH TO CHOOSE...
GREAT EYE, HOW DO WE KNOW WHERE TO GO?
THE SWANS SERVE THEIR MASTER, AND THAT IS WHO WE SEEK...
THE GREAT DESTROYER-- RABUM ALAL.
AND JUST AS WE BELIEVED, THE LIBRARY APPEARS VAST. ALMOST BEYOND COMPREHENSION.
BUT AS WE HAVE WITNESSED WITH OUR OWN EYES, THESE SWANS ARE FERVENT...THEY WORSHIP...
AND ALL HOLY THINGS MUST BE REVERED. AH!
THERE. THAT IS THE WAY MOST TRAVELED.
THAT IS THE PATH TO THEIR LIEGE...
AND THE ONE WE MUST FOLLOW.

IT'S AMAZING, REALLY. EACH ONE OF THESE ROOMS...FULL OF SOME STRANGE WONDER.
WE KNOW THESE. LONG-LOST SENTIIIIENT KEEPERS OF EXOTIIIIC KNOWLEDGE.
THEY MUST HAVE BEEN CAPTURED, CATALOGED AND STORED.
OF COURSE! IT DOES REASON THAT THE LIBRARY WOULD BE AN ACTUAL...*AHEM,* LIBRARY.
DO YOU KNOW WHAT THESE ARE?
LIIIVIIIING REPOSIIIITORIIIIES OF IIIINFORMATIIIION. HARDDRIIIIVES COMPOSED ENTIIIIIIRELY OF LIIIIIGHT.
STAY ALERT.
WE'VE REACHED AN INTERSECTION OF BRANCHING WORLDS.
THE FOOTSTEPS ARE BECOMING MORE DENSE...
I BELIEVE WE ARE GETTING CLOSER.

BE PREPARED FOR--
OH! THERE... IN THE NEXT CHAMBER...
"A SWAN."
=HURK!=
=HURK!=

You are in the void, priest. A vacuum.
This is a quiet room, and there are NO WORDS here.

WHETHER IT'S THE WHITE PATH OF ILLUMINATION OR THE DARK ARTS OF THE MOST MIDNIGHT HOUR...

THE FIRST THING YOU LEARN ABOUT MAGIC IS PRECISION.
IT'S LIKE ANY OTHER SCIENCE, REALLY...
THE DEVIL IS IN THE DETAILS.

YES, I AM THE GREAT EYE OF THE BLACK PRIESTS.
AND *THE WORDS,* WHICH I HAVE SO RECENTLY MASTERED, NOW FAIL ME AS THEY DO THEM.
BUT I AM ALSO THE *SORCERER SUPREME...*

A MASTER OF MANY THINGS.
I'VE SPENT MY LIFE LEARNING THE MINUTIA OF MYSTICISM.
RITUALS. LOST LANGUAGES.
SYMBOLS OF POWER.
SPIRITS. INCANTATIONS. PRINCIPALITIES.
AND THE MUCH DARKER THINGS.

BUT ALL OF IT-- THE ART, THE UNDERSTANDING, THE CONTROL-- IT ALL RELIES ON *PRECISION*.
THERE IS AN ORDER THAT MUST BE ADHERED TO.
AND URGENCY... DESPERATION... THESE THINGS DEFEAT ORDER.
THEY BRING CHAOS.
AND *CHAOS*...
IT BRINGS THE FALL.

LATER.
UHHHHHH...
WUH...
WHAT... WHERE...
WHERE ARE YOU TAKING ME?
WHERE DO YOU THINK, NECROMANCER?
EXACTLY WHERE YOUR RUINOUS WAYS END...
FEIGN REVERENCE.
KNOW TERROR.
FOR YOU GO NOW TO SEE **RABUM ALAL.**

OUR MASTER IS MERCILESS, AND THIS IS THE PATH TO OBLIVION...
WE CAN GO NO FURTHER, PRIEST.
WHAT DID THEY MEAN... THEY CAN GO NO FURTHER?
NO *SEEING* SWAN CAN WITHSTAND THE BLINDING LIGHT OF THE GREAT DESTROYER...
YES...
MANY YEARS AGO, I LEFT THE FLOCK AND DUG OUT MY EYES WITH MY OWN HANDS SO THAT I MIGHT SERVE AT HIS FEET...
RABUM ALAL SAYS ONLY THE BLIND CAN WITHSTAND THE BRILLIANCE OF THE SUN.
AND WHAT ELSE WOULD YOU CALL HIM--THE ONE ALL THINGS ORBIT...
YOU SHOULD KNOW, THERE IS NO ARCHIVE IN HIS GREAT LIBRARY THAT IS HIDDEN FROM HIS TERRIBLE GAZE...
AND THE ONLY REASON YOU LIVE WHILE THE OTHER PRIESTS DO NOT IS THAT YOU, NECROMANCER, CAUGHT HIS EYE.

HE DEMANDED THAT YOU BE BROUGHT BEFORE HIM...AND SO WE HAVE DONE HIS BIDDING...
FAREWELL, FOOLISH MAN... I HOPE HE BURNS THE SKIN FROM YOUR TRESPASSING BONES.
HELLO?
ENTER.
IN ALL THE WORLDS, IN ALL THE UNIVERSES...
I WOULD NEVER HAVE EXPECTED TO SEE *YOU* HERE.

HELLO, STEPHEN...
IT'S BEEN FAR TOO LONG.

MY GOD...
DOOM? HOW IS THIS...
YOU'RE RABUM ALAL?
I AM.
I'VE BUILT A RELIGION...AND IT HAS STOKED A GRAND FIRE WITHIN ME.
ONE HOT ENOUGH AND WELL SUITED FOR THE TASK AT HAND.
WE'RE READY FOR WAR, STEPHEN.
I HAVE DISCIPLES, BUT I ALWAYS HAVE ROOM FOR MORE...
YOU REMEMBER OWEN REECE?
THE MOLECULE MAN. YES.
HE IS AN ORACLE FOR THE TIMES.
ALL THE PIECES ARE COMING TOGETHER.
ALL THE THINGS WE'VE BUILT WILL SOON BE CRUMBLING DOWN.
BECAUSE THEY'RE OUT THERE...WAITING. THE IVORY KINGS. THE BEYONDERS...
AND HOW CAN WE DEFEAT THEM? WE COGS IN THEIR WELL-OILED APOCALYPSE MACHINE?

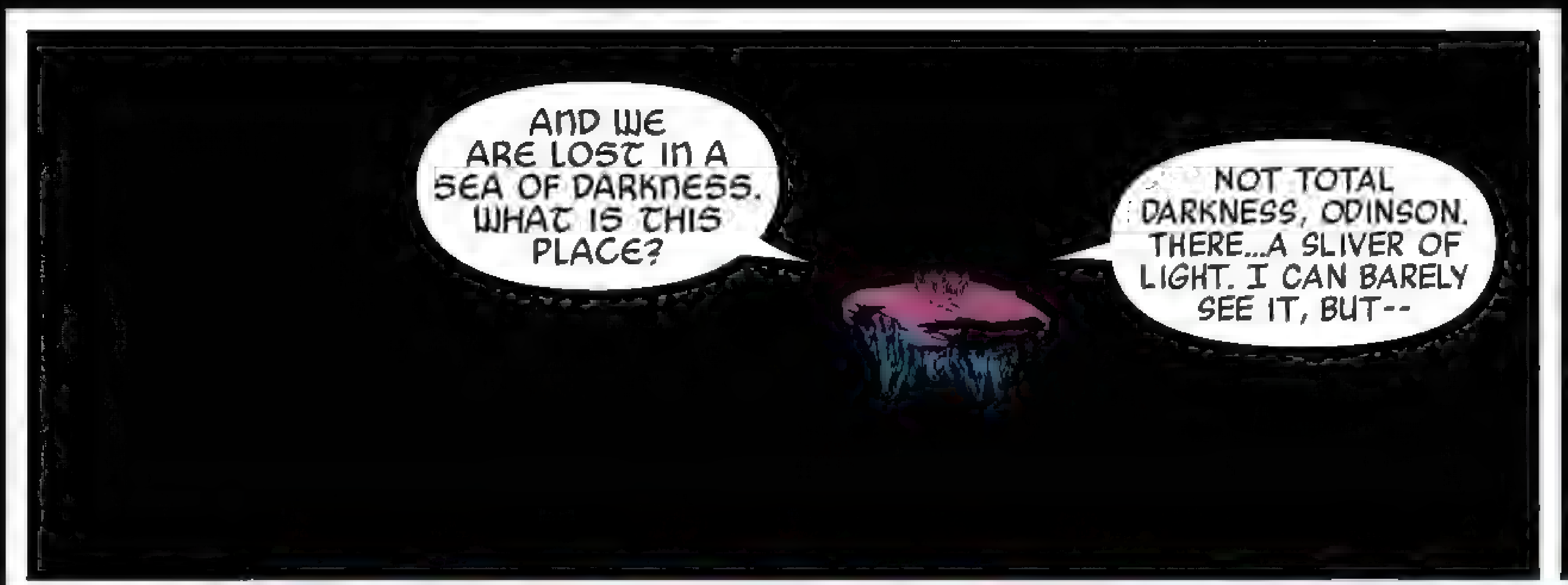
"FOR IT TAKES A GOD TO KILL A GOD."

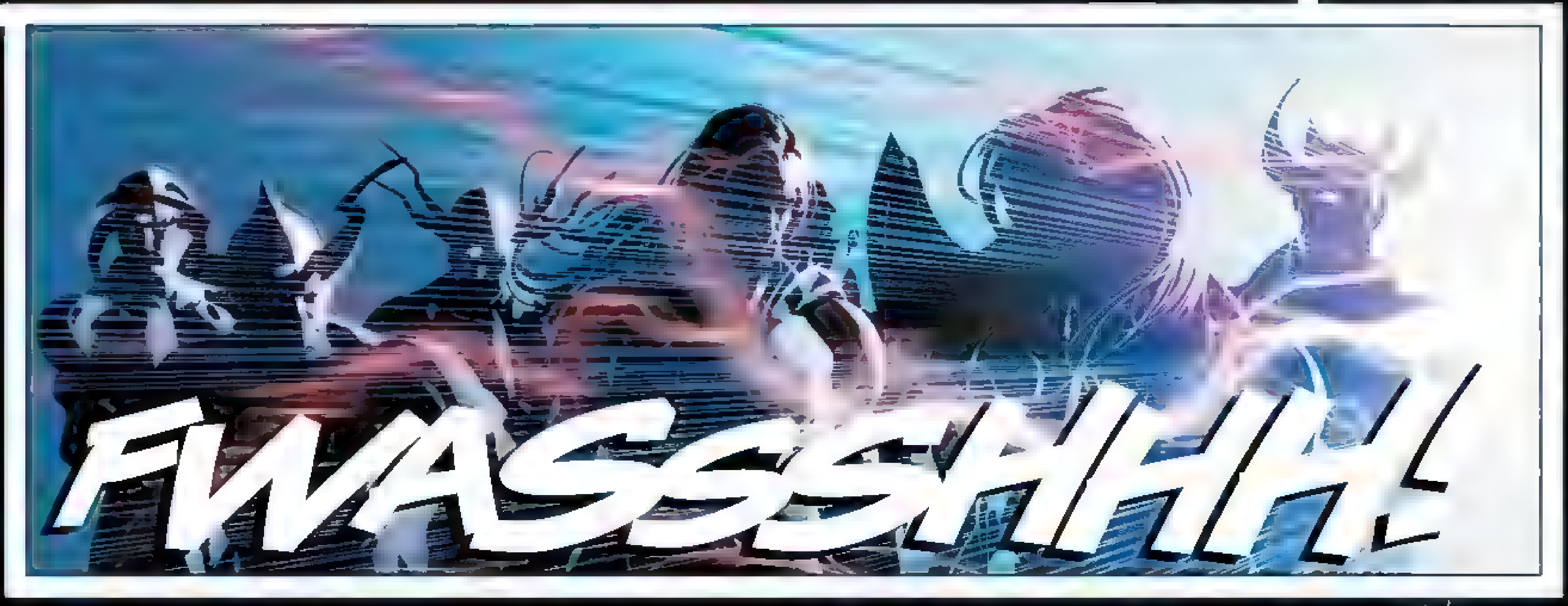
“THE FALL OF GODS”

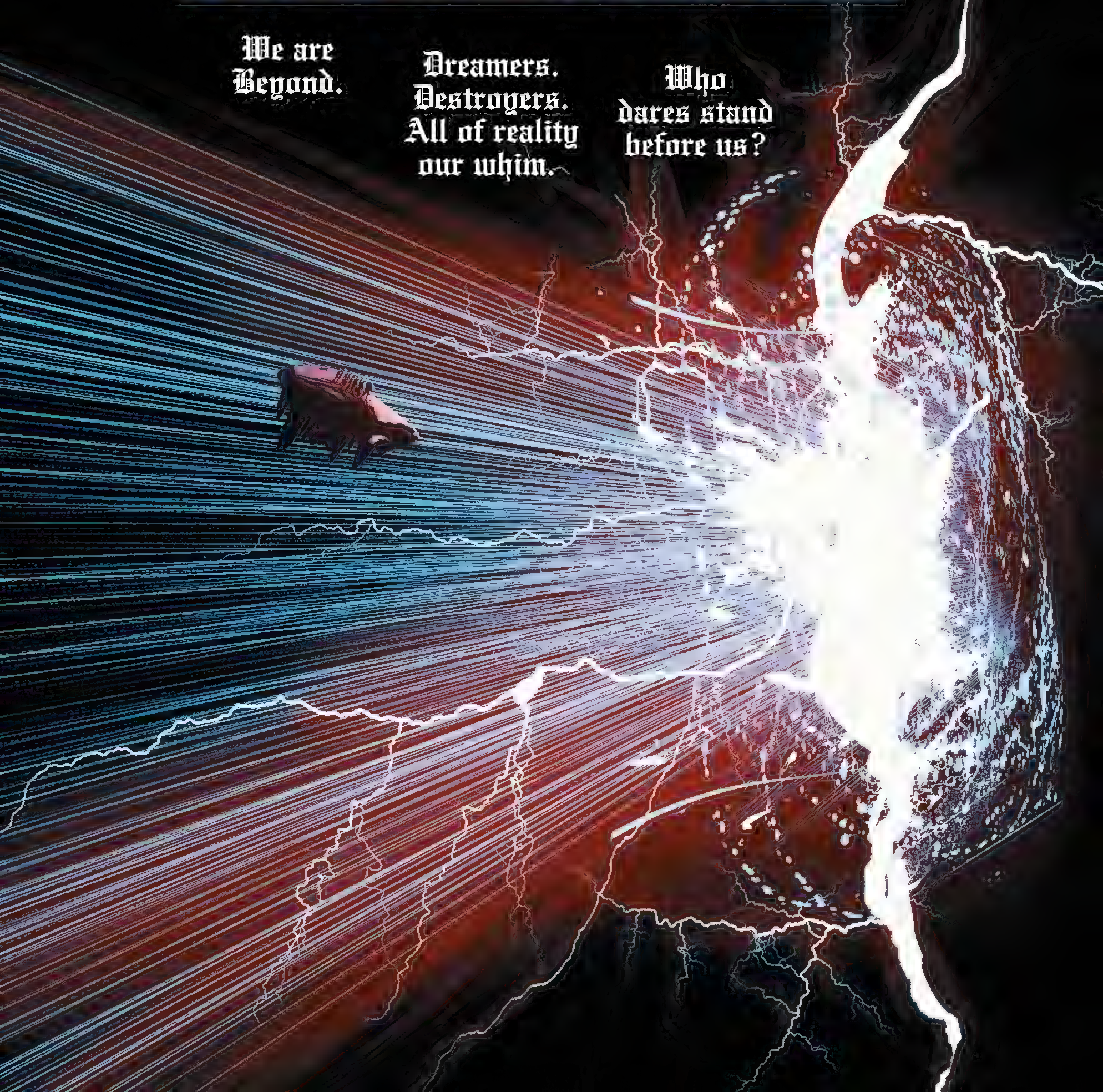
THE REMAINS OF EARTH-1120006. A SHATTERED MAPMAKER WORLD.
WE DON'T HAVE LONG HERE.
STARS ARE COLLAPSING, SUNS ARE DYING...
WE'RE NEARING THE LAST GASP OF THIS UNIVERSE.
I DON'T KNOW WHAT'S HAPPENED TO INCREASE THE RATE OF DECAY--I'M SURE SOME ACCELERATION WAS INEVITABLE--BUT WHATEVER REASON IS BEHIND THE WHY...
...IT'S DISRUPTING THE MAPPING SYSTEM THE IVORY KINGS CREATED. THIS IS, WHAT, THE TENTH NONFUNCTIONAL MAPMAKER WE'VE FOUND?
YES, NIGHTMASK, BUT WHAT GOOD IS--
A MAP?
DELVE DEEP, ABYSS--YOU TELL US.
AHHHHHH...NO WONDER WE COULDN'T FIND THEM. THEY'RE NOT HERE IN THE SAME SENSE WE ARE...
LIKE MUSIC PLAYING AT A FREQUENCY JUST BEYOND OUR ABILITY TO HEAR.
LET ME SHOW YOU...
SHLK
THIS IS WHERE WE ARE...
AND, NOW, THAT'S WHERE WE'RE GOING.

IT SEEMS THERE IS A WAY OUT OF THE WOODS, BROTHER. THEY'VE FOUND IT.
YES.
BUT CAN THE TWO OF YOU GET US THERE?
I CAN FIND THE WAY... I CAN POINT US THERE, BUT...
YES. I CAN DO IT.
ADAM...
WE HAVE TO GET THERE--NOW--FOR IT TO MATTER. SO THERE ISN'T ANY CHOICE, REALLY...
EVEN IF THERE WAS, I WOULDN'T CHANGE MY MIND.
HOW MANY YEARS? HOW MUCH WILL IT COST THIS TIME?
MANY. STILL, IT HAS TO BE DONE.
I'M READY IF YOU ARE.
VERY WELL...
DO IT.
NRRGGGGGHHH!
EX NIHILO BUILT ADAM TO BE THE PERFECT HUMAN...

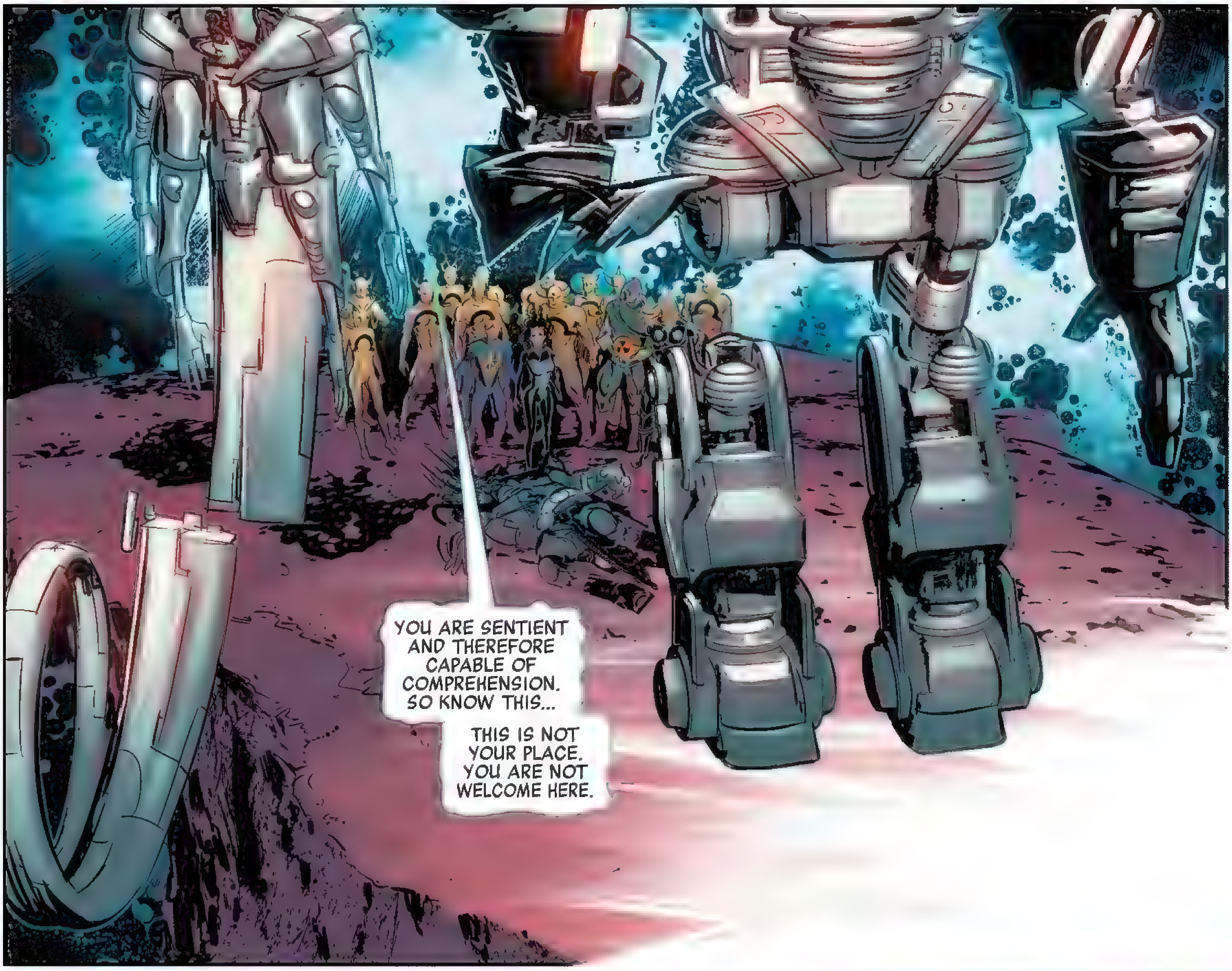
A FABRICATED PRODUCT OF A LIFE-CREATING SYSTEM.
EVEN BETTER THAN THE REAL THING.
THE LAST WHITE EVENT CHANGED ADAM INTO SOMETHING MORE--A NIGHTMASK CAPABLE OF NAVIGATING THE DREAMSPACE OF HUMAN POTENTIAL.
BUT THE COST OF THIS POWER IS TEMPORAL REGRESSION--A GRADUAL RETURN TO HIS PREFABRICATED, PRIMORDIAL STATE.
THIS IS BELIEVED TO BE A FLAW--SOME ACCIDENTAL GLITCH IN ONE OF THE UNIVERSAL SYSTEMS THAT MADE HIM WHAT HE IS.
BUT THAT'S A SIMPLE, MICROSCOPIC WAY OF LOOKING AT A MUCH BROADER DILEMMA.
DON'T YOU UNDERSTAND?
HERE AT THE END TIMES, THEY'RE *ALL* BROKEN SYSTEMS.
HE'S GONE!

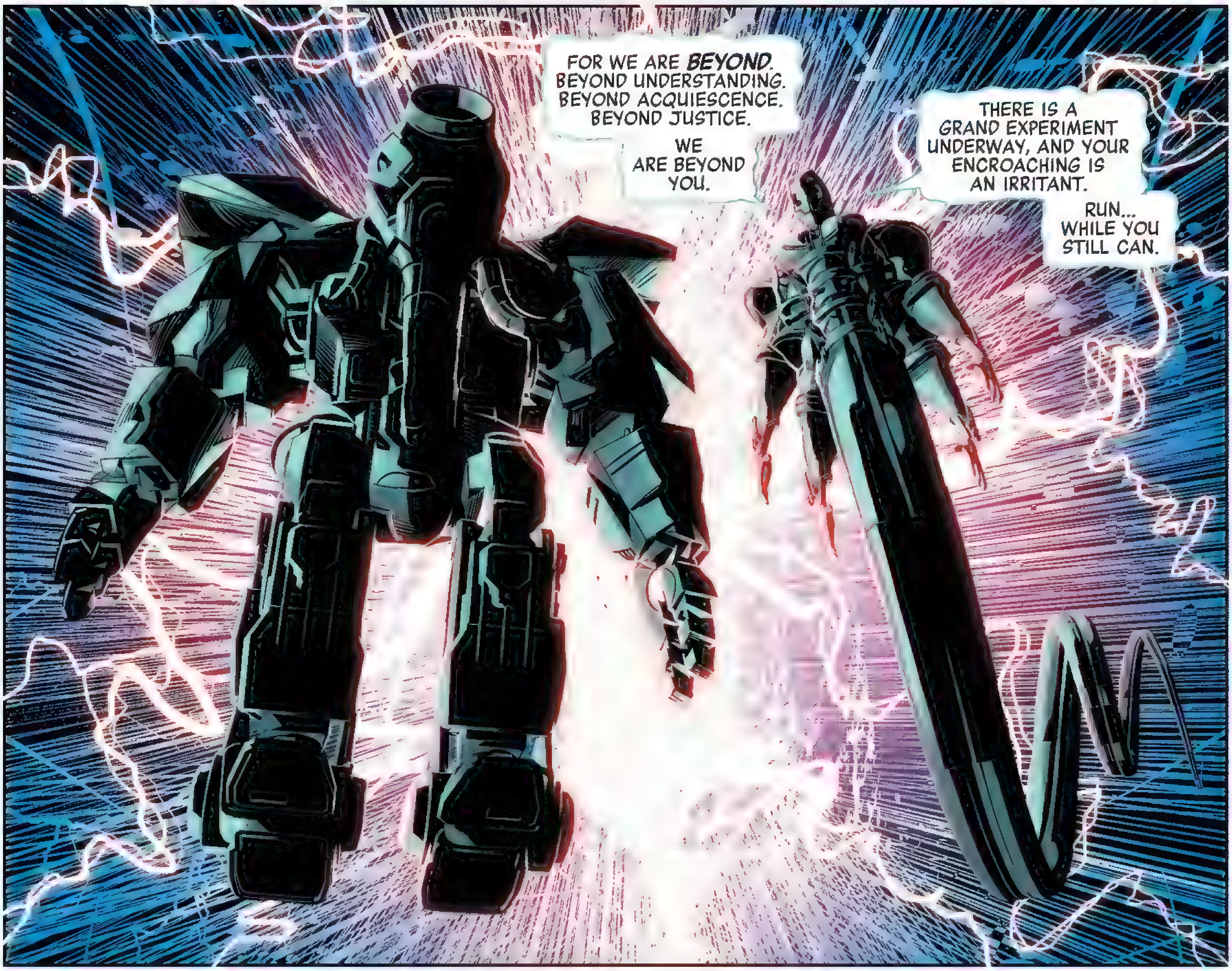

AND WE ARE LOST IN A SEA OF DARKNESS. WHAT IS THIS PLACE?
NOT TOTAL DARKNESS, ODINSON. THERE...A SLIVER OF LIGHT. I CAN BARELY SEE IT, BUT--


FWASSSHHH!


We are Beyond.
Dreamers. Destroyers. All of reality our whim.
Who dares stand before us?

GODS, LEGENDS... THE VERY BEST OF HEROES. YOU FACE AVENGERS THIS DAY...
WHO DARES STAND BEFORE US?
Two.
Two will stand.
INTERLOPERS...


YOU ARE SENTIENT AND THEREFORE CAPABLE OF COMPREHENSION. SO KNOW THIS...
THIS IS NOT YOUR PLACE. YOU ARE NOT WELCOME HERE.

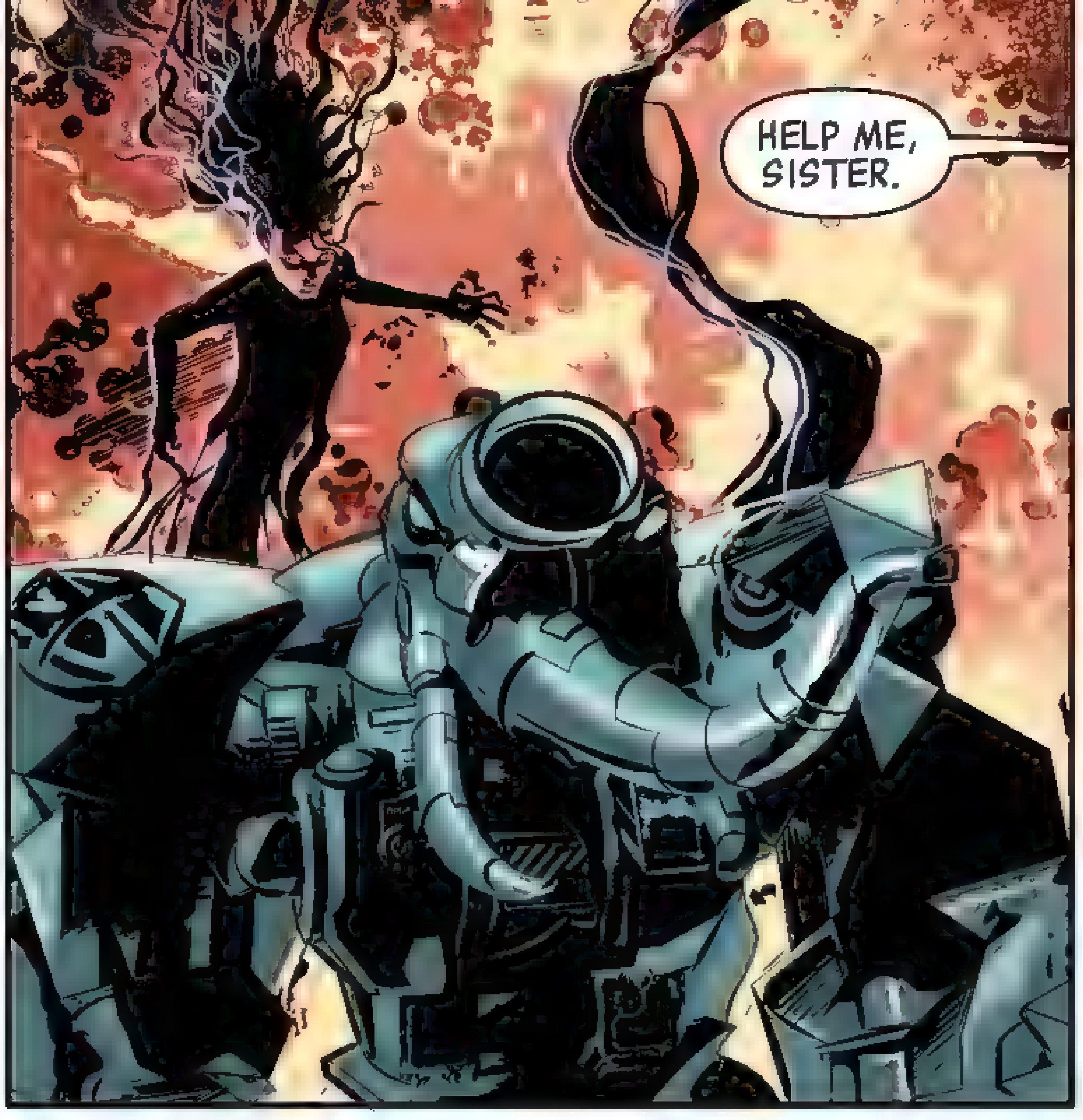

FOR WE ARE *BEYOND*. BEYOND UNDERSTANDING. BEYOND ACQUIESCENCE. BEYOND JUSTICE.
WE ARE BEYOND YOU.
THERE IS A GRAND EXPERIMENT UNDERWAY, AND YOUR ENCROACHING IS AN IRRITANT.
RUN... WHILE YOU STILL CAN.

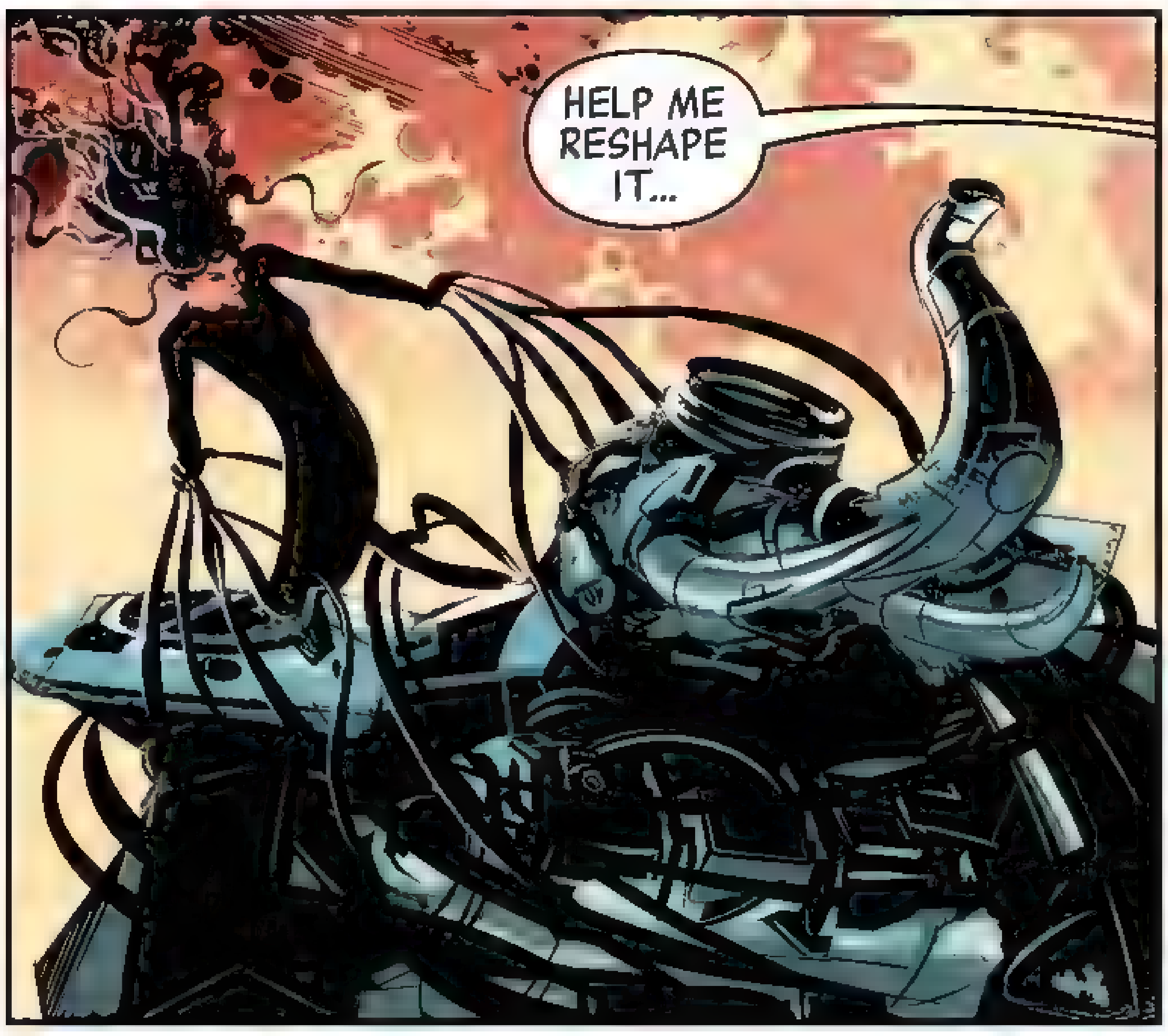
OUR WORLD--ALL WORLDS--ARE DYING...
I DO NOT RUN, BUT EVEN IF I DID, THERE IS NO SAFE PLACE TO RUN TO.
YOU NEED TO STOP THIS... EXPERIMENT, AS IT HAS HAD UNFORESEEN, AND TERRIBLE, CONSEQUENCES.
WHOSOEVER HOLDS THIS HAMMER IF HE BE UNWORTHY, SHALL POSSESS THE POWER OF THORR
UNFORESEEN? THERE ARE NO ACCIDENTS...
WE ARE THE VERY CAUSE OF IT.
THEN STOP.
NOW.
AND HOW COULD WE DO THAT?
THE EXPERIMENT ISN'T FINISHED YET.
YES... IT IS!

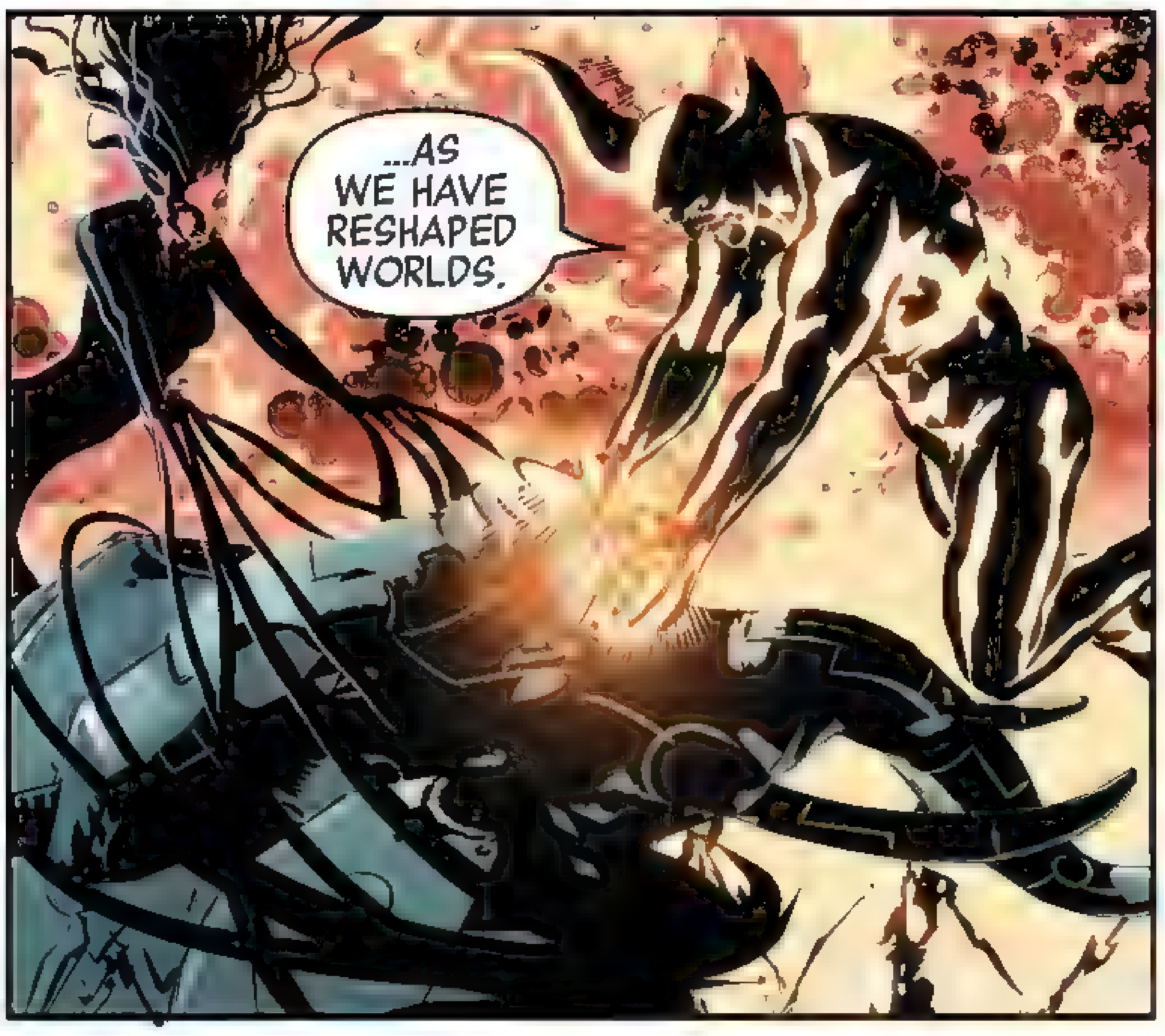
THOOOOM!
SUCH IMPATIENCE...
CAN YOU NOT REALIZE THE QUICKEST WAY FOR THIS TO END IS FOR US TO COMPLETE WHAT WE SET OUT TO DO?
EXTINCTION IS INEVITABLE. THE SOONER IT OCCURS--
--THE SOONER THIS WILL ALL BE OVER.

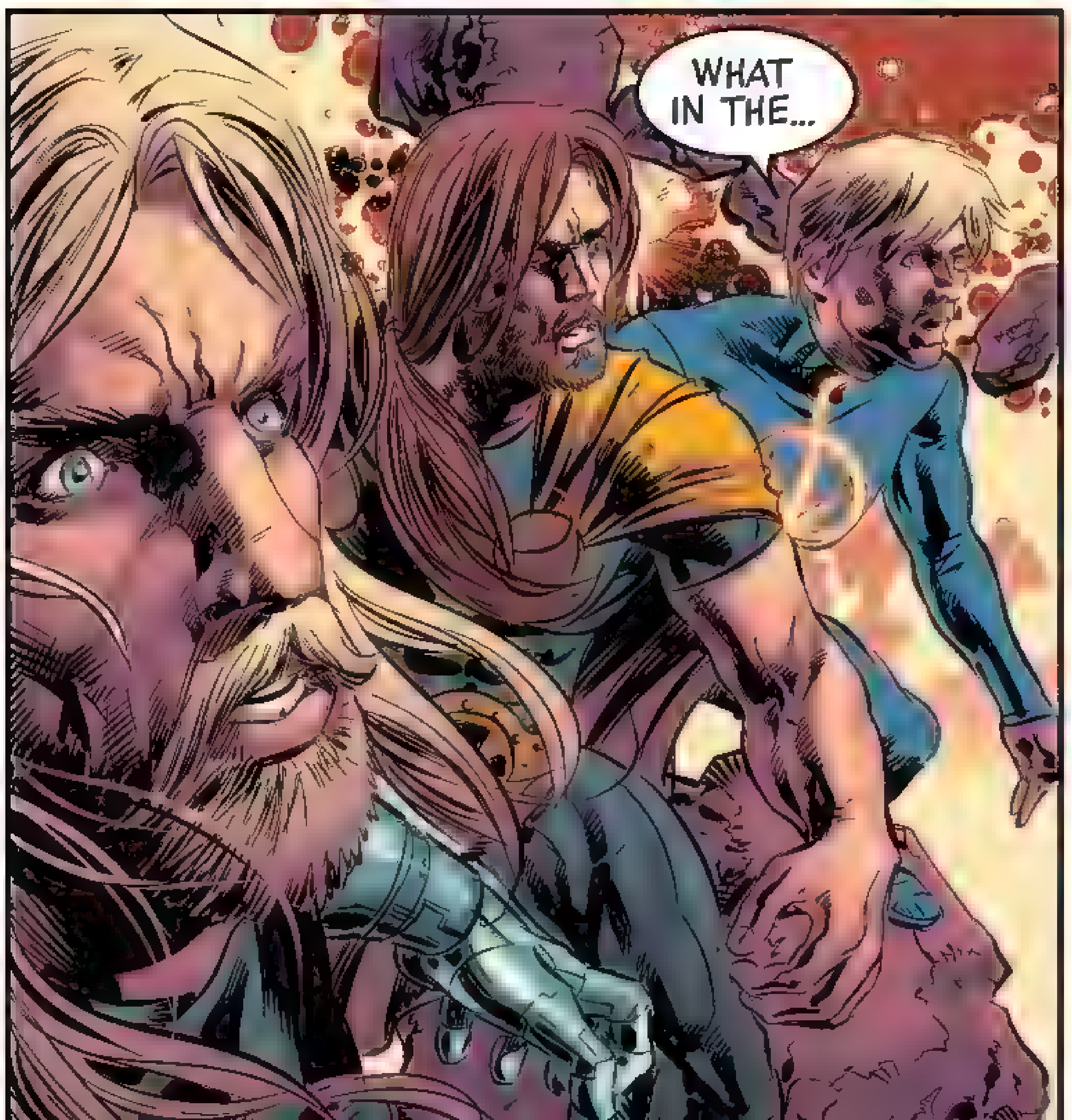
DON'T HESITATE!
WE'RE ONLY GOING TO GET ONE CHANCE AT THIS-- THROW EVERYTHING YOU HAVE AT THEM.
EX NIHILO! I CAN SEE WHAT THEY ARE!
THE FORMS THEY TAKE ARE MANIFESTATIONS-- SOLID STATES CONTAINING THEIR VERY ESSENCE.
I UNDERSTAND, SISTER.
EX NIHILI...
"THEY CAN CHANGE...

"TAKE NEW FORMS...
"BECOME SOMETHING DIFFERENT...
"WE CAN HELP THIS ONE..."
WHAT ARE YOU ATTEMPTING TO--
HRNNNN.
"HELP IT BECOME SOMETHING BETTER..."
THE EX NIHILII HAVE FULLY VISUALIZED THE BEYONDER'S CURRENT FORM.
SOLID, AND THEREFORE ITS MOST MALLEABLE STATE.


HELP ME, SISTER.


HELP ME RESHAPE IT...


...AS WE HAVE RESHAPED WORLDS.


WHAT IN THE...

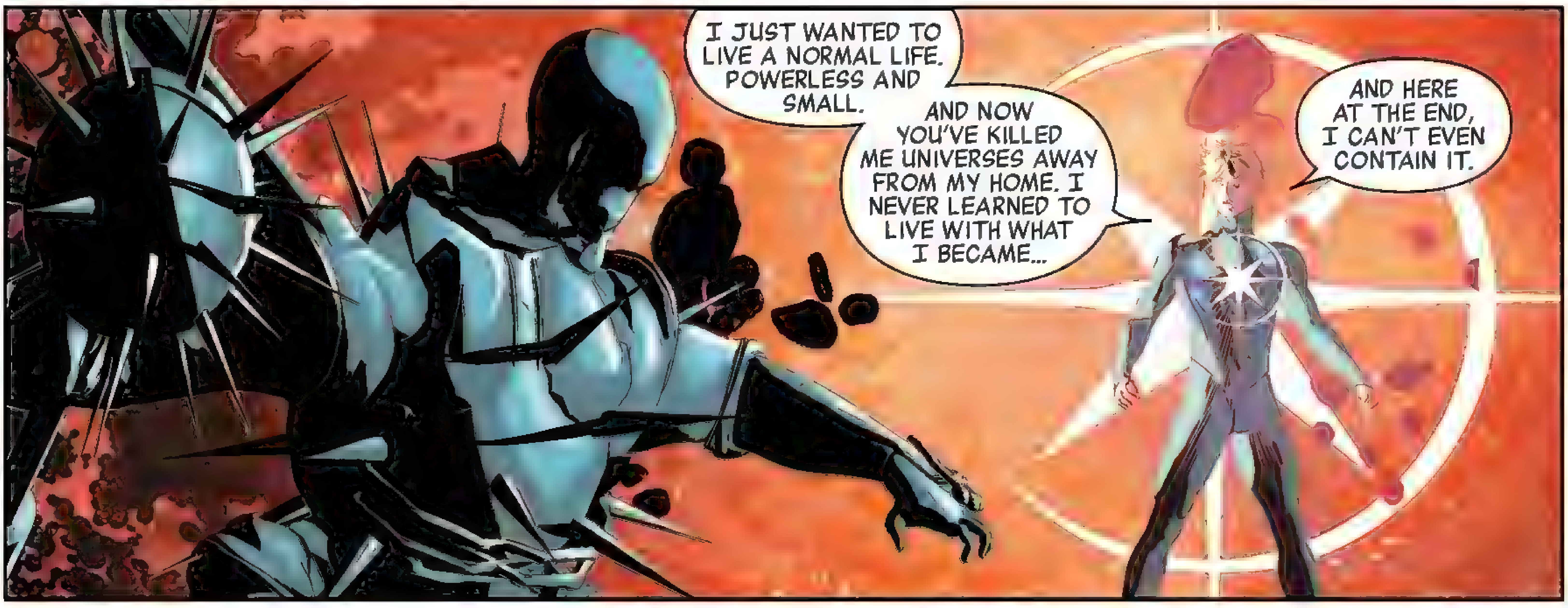
IT COST EVERYTHING, THIS ONE LAST ACT OF CREATION.
YES. BUT LOOK AT WHAT WE HAVE MADE...
IMAGING THAT... ONE LAST GARDEN-- A PERFECT LIVING THING, IN SUCH A COLD AND UNFORGIVING PLACE.

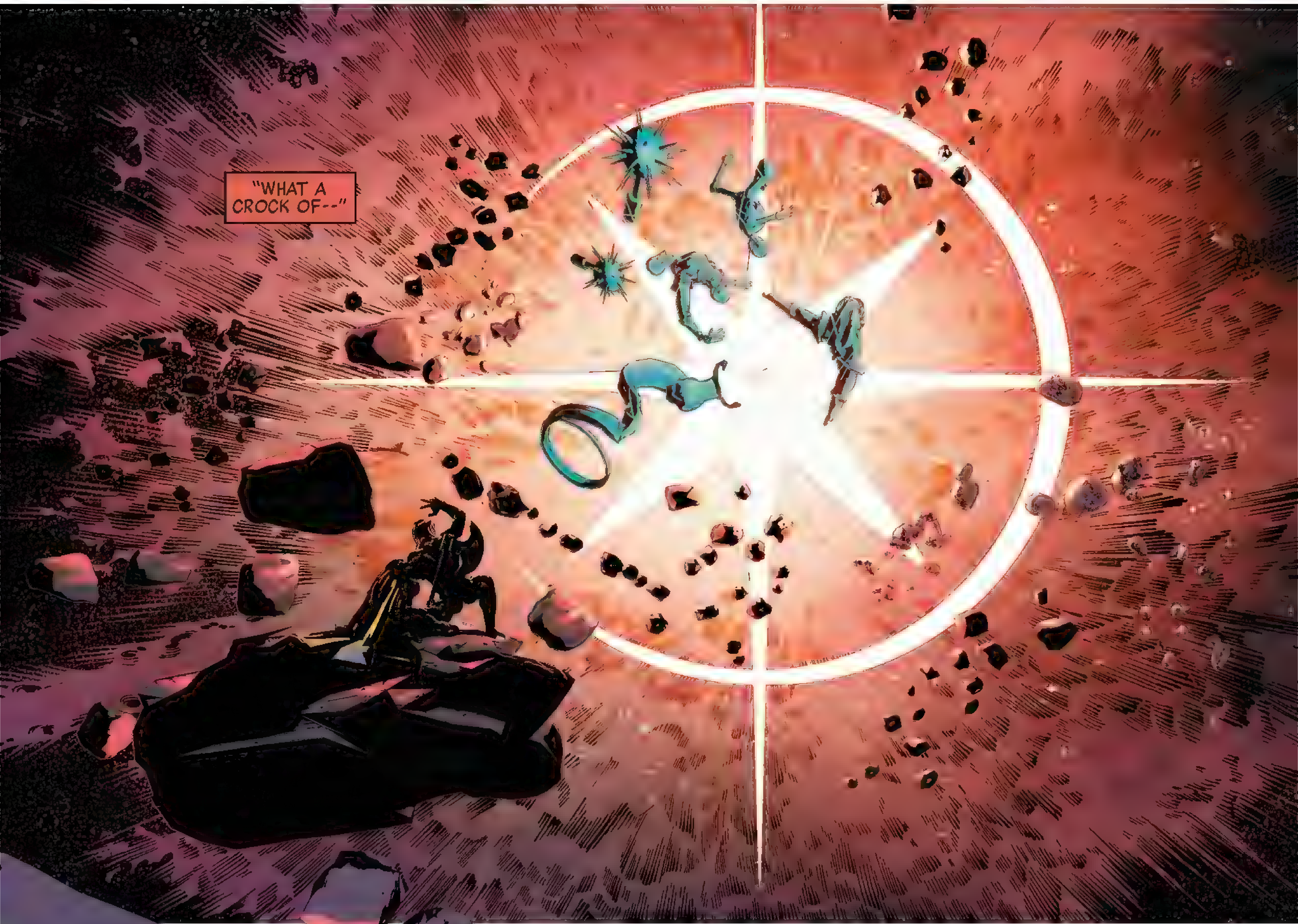
"IT'S A GOOD ENOUGH END."
THEY'RE GONE...
AND THEY LEFT A FREAKING TREE. SUPER.
WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?
WE'RE CONDUCTING AN EXPERIMENT OF OUR OWN, YOU HEARTLESS DEVIL...
AND OURS IS HALFWAY DONE!
HRRRPHH!
DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA OF...THE *SIGNIFICANCE* OF US?
SHRRIPPP!
AARRGHHHHHH!

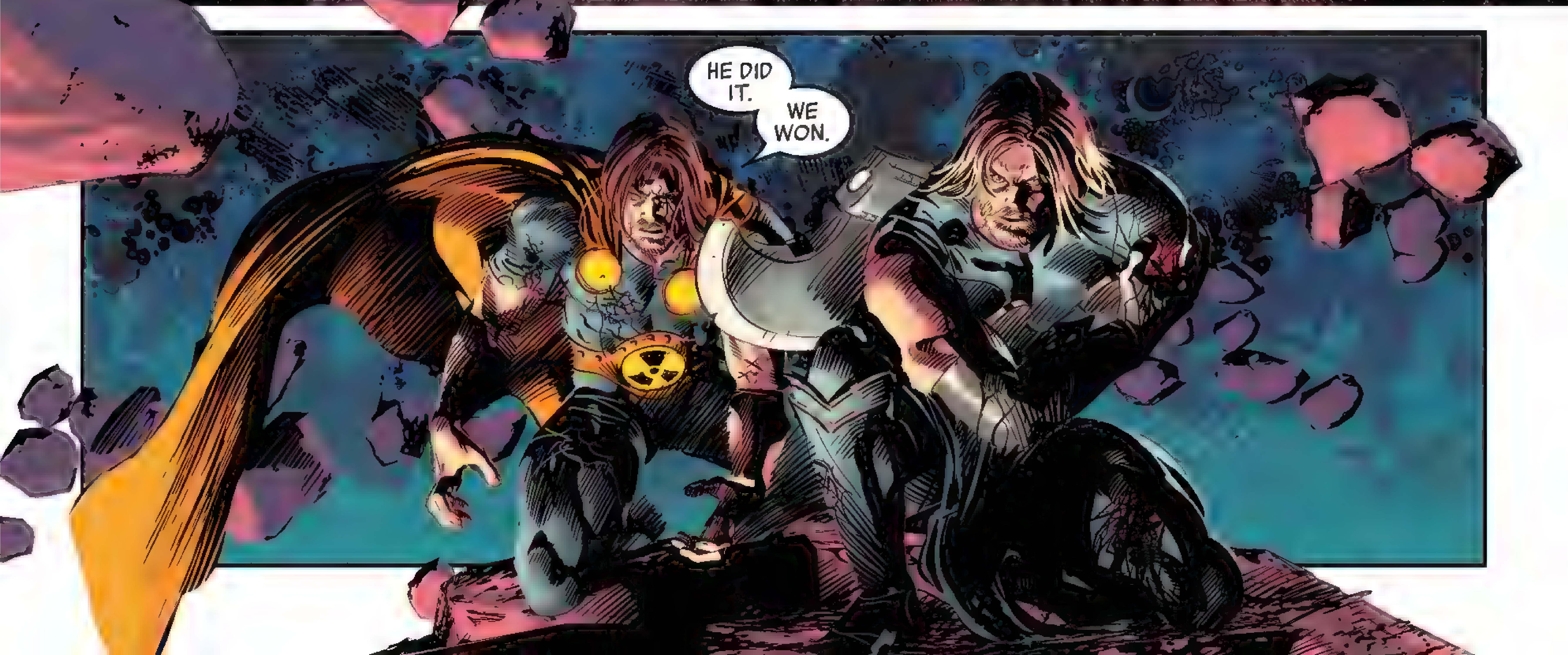
THE COST OF OUR LIFE COMPARED TO YOUR OWN?
HYPERION! IS THOR OKAY?
IS HE--
STARBRAND! LOOK OUT!
WHU--
HURK!
YOU... YOU'VE...
STABBED ME THROUGH...
OH, GOD... YOU'VE KILLED ME.
DAMN THING IS FASTER THAN I THOUGHT.
YEAH, WELL...FAST IS ONE THING...

FAST AS LIGHT, ANOTHER...
LOOK HERE, MONSTER.
I AM THE SUN.
FOOLISH CREATURE.
I CREATE STARS...
UHHHHH...
I DESTROY THEM...
WHAT MAKES YOU ANY DIFFERENT?
AARRGGGGGHH!

RAAARRR!
HUUHHH...
YOU WANT TO KILL HIM... KILL US ALL? KILL EVERYTHING? THEN I WILL GO FIRST... BUT I WILL NOT GO QUIETLY.
FASCINATING. YOU KNOW YOU CAN'T WIN...
YET YOU HOLD TIGHT TO THIS IDEA OF RESISTANCE.
CAN'T...
CONTAIN...
HOW POINTLESS.
CLARNNGGG!
ARRGHHHHHHHHH!
HOW HOPELESS.
I NEVER WANTED THIS...


I JUST WANTED TO LIVE A NORMAL LIFE. POWERLESS AND SMALL.
AND NOW YOU'VE KILLED ME UNIVERSES AWAY FROM MY HOME. I NEVER LEARNED TO LIVE WITH WHAT I BECAME...
AND HERE AT THE END, I CAN'T EVEN CONTAIN IT.


"WHAT A CROCK OF--"


HE DID IT.
WE WON.

I THINK... I THINK WE'RE NOT FINISHED YET.
THE FISSURE.
THEIR EXPERIMENT CONTINUES...
WE'LL FIND A WAY TO CLOSE THE DOOR--REPAIR THE DAMAGE.
HEALING BEGINS WITH CLOSING THE WOUND, NO?
IT'S A DEEP CUT, HYPERION...THIS WILL TAKE SOME TIME...
BUT DID YOU SEE THE LOOK ON THAT MONSTER'S FACE WHEN HE REALIZED THAT--
OH, NO...
THOR!
"LOOK...

"MORE OF THEM...
"MUCH MORE."

WE'RE GOING TO DIE HERE TODAY.
AYE...
BUT LET IT BE ON OUR TERMS.
ONE MORE TIME. OUR VERY...
HUURGGGG!
...BEST.
EVER HOLDS THIS HAMMER
HE BE UNWORTHY, SHALL
POSSESS THE POWER OF
THORR

HA! HA!HA! HA!
SO BE IT.
IF THIS IS THE END, LET ME NOT MEET IT AS *THE UNWORTHY*... BUT AS MY FATHER'S SON.
THE OCCASION DEMANDS I OFFER YOU A DRINK, HYPERION, BUT UNFORTUNATELY, I HAVE NONE.
THAT'S BECAUSE WE DRANK IT ALL, BROTHER.
YES. WE DID.
NOTHING LEFT TO DO NOW BUT THE OTHER THING.
I JUST WANT TO SAY...
FOR SOME TIME I BELIEVED I SURVIVED THE DEATH OF TWO WORLDS-- NOW I KNOW IT JUST TOOK A WHILE TO CATCH UP WITH ME.
IT'S A DARK THING, WHAT MY LIFE BECAME... YOU HAVE MADE IT *BETTER,* ODINSON.
WILL YOU WAIT FOR ME IN VALHALLA?
BROTHER...
THIS DAY, I WILL *RACE* YOU THERE.

AGAINST THE BLEAK NOTHING OF DEAD SPACE, TWO GODS FELL TO MANY.

THE SUN SHONE ONE LAST TIME.
THERE WAS LIGHTNING, AND THUNDER...
AND THEN SILENCE.

“IN LATVERIA, THE FLOWERS DIE IN SUMMER”

"DO YOU WANT TO HEAR A STORY?
"HERE IS A STORY..."
YOU WANTED TO SEE WHERE IT STARTED...WELL, HERE IT IS, VICTOR...
OR DO YOU NEED TO SEE IT MORE CLEARLY?
YES.
I'VE BUILT YOUR DOOR, MISTER REECE...
CAN YOU SHOW US THE WAY NOW THAT I'VE OPENED IT?
THE WAY IS DOWN, VICTOR...

ALL THE WAY DOWN.
BACK.
BACK TO THE VERY START OF IT...
TO THE BROKEN MIRROR...
WHERE THE END OF EVERYTHING BEGAN...

AND HERE WE ARE.
YES. THIS PLACE IS WHERE YOU BECAME THE MOLECULE MAN.
A LONG AND TWISTED TALE IT IS, MISTER REECE... BUT DOOM KNOWS *YOUR STORY*.
YOU *KNOW?* WHAT EXACTLY DO YOU KNOW?
SOME SECONDHAND ACCOUNT THAT BECAME AN ORIGIN IN THE TELLING-- AN ACCEPTED NARRATIVE MAGICALLY ENCAPSULATING ALL THAT I WAS AND WHAT YOU THINK I BECAME?
YOU DON'T KNOW ANYTHING AT ALL, VICTOR VON DOOM. BUT YOU SHOULD KNOW THIS...
I AM RETURNED HERE WHOLE AGAIN.
ALL OF US.
DISPLACEMENT-- TEMPORAL OR NOT-- SHOULD NOT RESULT IN THIS...
THE PSYCHOTIC WILDNESS...THE HYSTERICAL CHATTER...
WHAT HAPPENED TO YOUR MADNESS, MISTER REECE?
NOTHING YET.

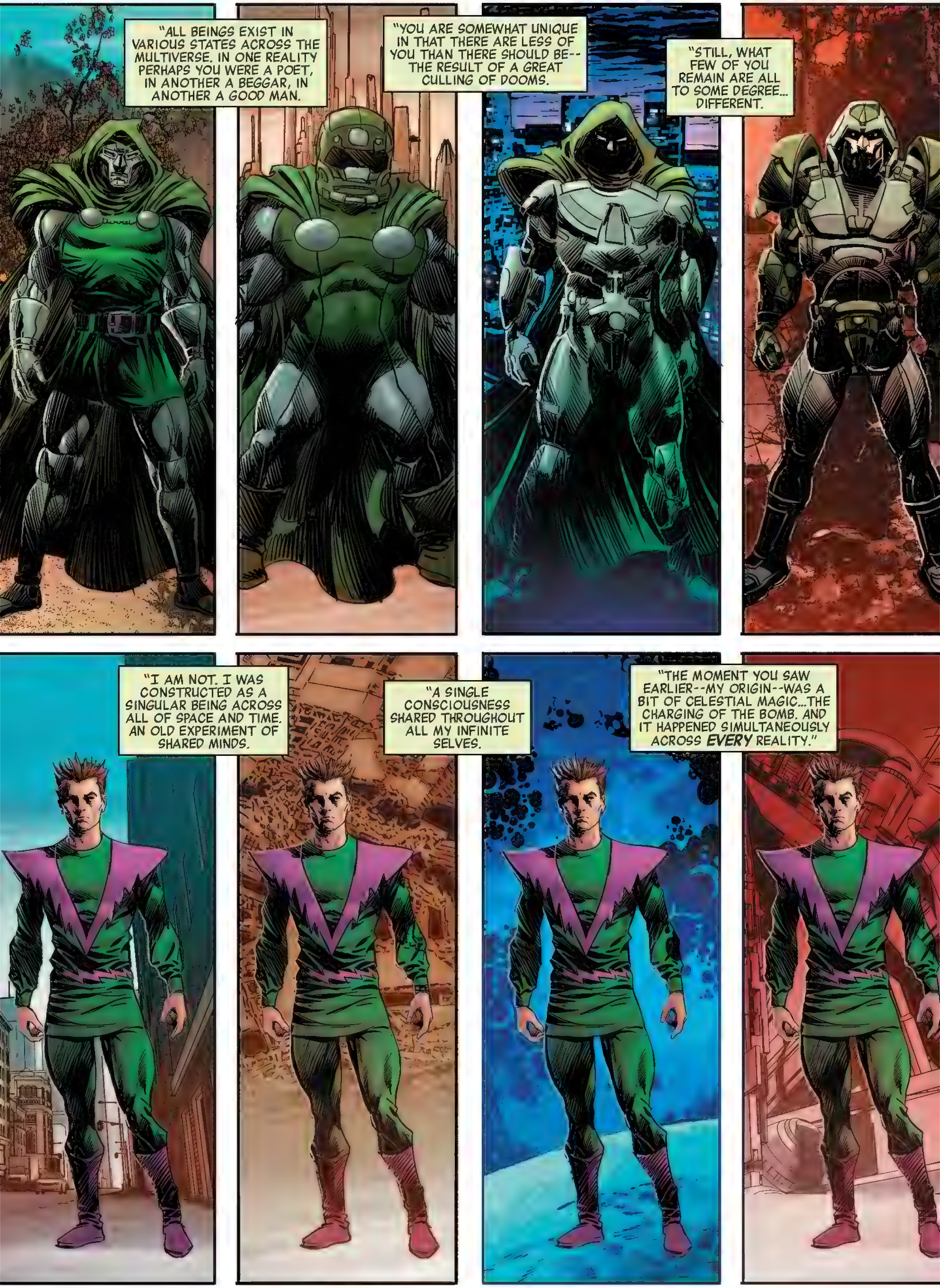
WATCH.
YOU'RE A MAN OF BOTH SCIENCE AND MAGIC, VICTOR.
THE NATURAL AND UNNATURAL...
QUITE THE DICHOTOMY, AND THE ONE PERSON PERFECTLY CAPABLE OF FULLY COMPREHENDING WHAT I'M GOING TO TELL YOU.
I AM NOT A MAN. NOT THE WAY THAT MOST PEOPLE UNDERSTAND "BEING HUMAN."
HERE WE ARE NOW--NOT ONLY HAVE WE FALLEN BACK IN TIME TO MY SO-CALLED ORIGIN, BUT WE ARE IN ANOTHER UNIVERSE ALL TOGETHER.
NATURAL AND UNNATURAL.
A MACHINE OF GREAT SCIENCE... AND THE MAGIC ON WHICH IT RUNS...

THAT MAN THERE...HE IS NOT ME, AND YET...
HE IS ME.
HE DOESN'T UNDERSTAND IT YET.
OF COURSE NOT. EXPLAINING IT ISN'T ENOUGH.
NO, WE HAVE TO SHOW HIM.
ARE YOU READY?
DO YOU REMEMBER--BEFORE THIS MOMENT--WHEN WE WERE YOUNGER. SEVEN, I THINK...
IT WAS SPRING AND WE WERE CHASING A FRIEND THROUGH THE WOODS. THERE WAS A BEAUTIFUL WHITE FLOWER GROWING BESIDE A LARGE OAK TREE. IT CAUGHT OUR ATTENTION...
WE STOPPED RUNNING SO WE COULD LEAN DOWN AND SMELL IT.

I AM NOT THAT SMELL, OR THE BIRDS CHIRPING...OR ANY OTHER SOUND OF THE FOREST. I AM THE LIGHT PERFECTLY HITTING THE FLOWER.
BITS OF DUST HEATED BY THE SUN, SWIMMING IN THE AIR ABOVE IT.
IT WAS A CHERISHED MEMORY.
EVERYTHING IS LOSS.
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
SENDING A MESSAGE.

AARRGHHHHHH!
NOW THAT MEMORY IS GONE... FOREVER...
AND NOW, VICTOR, YOUR...ORIGIN-- MUCH LIKE MINE-- IS A FICTION THAT WILL BECOME ACCEPTED AS REAL.
BUT THIS IS THE ONLY TIME WE'RE GOING TO DO THIS TOGETHER. FROM NOW ON, IT'S GOING TO BE UP TO YOU.
IF YOU DON'T... THEY'LL NEVER CALL YOU THE GREAT DESTROYER. WILL THEY, VICTOR?
THEY?
EVERYONE.
THE FALLEN. THE VICTIMS OF DYING WORLDS. YOUR FAITHFUL. AND MORE THAN ANYONE ELSE...
YOUR ENEMIES.
COME. I'LL SHOW YOU.

THIS IS THE LIBRARY OF WORLDS. A CONDUIT BETWEEN UNIVERSES BUILT BY THE BEYONDERS WHEN THEY STILL BELIEVED "LIFE" TO BE A VALUABLE EXPERIMENT.
THE LIBRARY EXISTS IN A VERSION OF THE SAME UNOBSERVABLE SPACE THE BEYONDERS WATCH THE MULTIVERSE FROM. AS SUCH, FROM HERE YOU TOO WILL BE UNOBSERVABLE...
BOTH TO THE WORLDS, AND TO THEM.
IF THERE IS ONE THING I HAVE LEARNED FROM THE CONQUEST OF COWARDS, IT'S THAT ONE CANNOT HIDE FOREVER.
OH, YOU WON'T BE HIDING...AND YOU'RE RIGHT, EVENTUALLY YOU WILL BE FOUND...
BUT THAT WILL BE BY AN OLD FRIEND. OUR CONCERN--YOUR *SOLE* CONCERN--IS THE IVORY KINGS THEMSELVES. YOU MUST STOP *THE BEYONDERS*.
FROM DOING WHAT EXACTLY?
"CONDUCTING THEIR GRANDEST OF GRAND EXPERIMENTS. *THE SIMULTANEOUS DEATH OF EVERYTHING IN THE MULTIVERSE.*
"YOU REMEMBER YOUR FIRST ENCOUNTER WITH THE CHILD BEYONDER? IT DESTROYED A UNIVERSE IN ORDER TO CONSTRUCT A PLAY WORLD OUT OF THE ASHES...
"*THESE* ARE ITS BETTERS, WITH FAR MORE AMBITIOUS GOALS..."
AND DO YOU KNOW WHAT *I* AM?
I AM THEIR BOMB.


"ALL BEINGS EXIST IN VARIOUS STATES ACROSS THE MULTIVERSE. IN ONE REALITY PERHAPS YOU WERE A POET, IN ANOTHER A BEGGAR, IN ANOTHER A GOOD MAN.
"YOU ARE SOMEWHAT UNIQUE IN THAT THERE ARE LESS OF YOU THAN THERE SHOULD BE--THE RESULT OF A GREAT CULLING OF DOOMS.
"STILL, WHAT FEW OF YOU REMAIN ARE ALL TO SOME DEGREE... DIFFERENT.
"I AM NOT. I WAS CONSTRUCTED AS A SINGULAR BEING ACROSS ALL OF SPACE AND TIME. AN OLD EXPERIMENT OF SHARED MINDS.
"A SINGLE CONSCIOUSNESS SHARED THROUGHOUT ALL MY INFINITE SELVES.
"THE MOMENT YOU SAW EARLIER--MY ORIGIN--WAS A BIT OF CELESTIAL MAGIC...THE CHARGING OF THE BOMB. AND IT HAPPENED SIMULTANEOUSLY ACROSS EVERY REALITY."

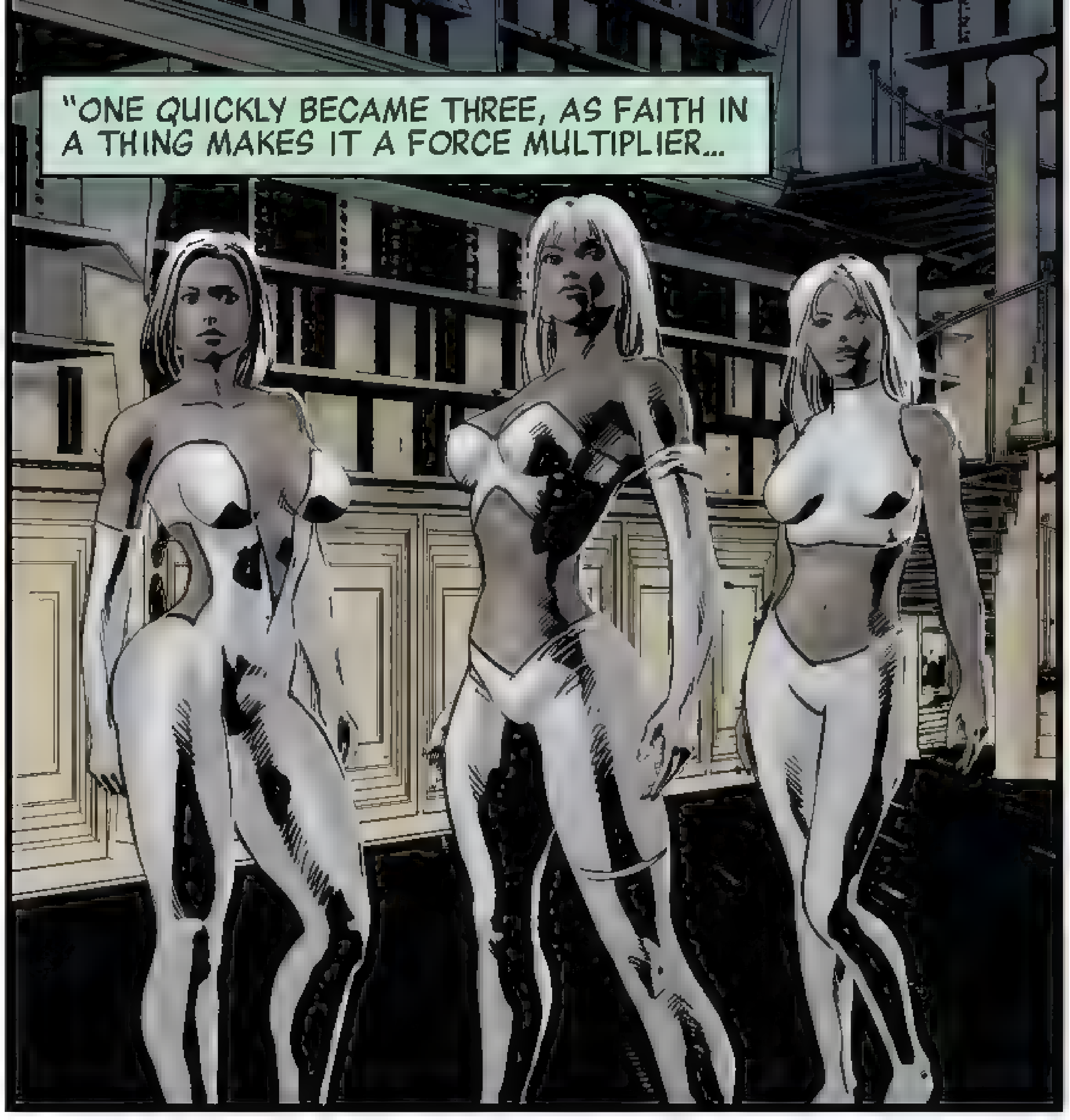
THEY LIT MY FUSE, AND NOW I--ALL OF ME--AM TERMINAL. AND WHEN I DIE...I'LL TAKE **MY UNIVERSE** WITH ME.
AND THEY WANT TO SEE WHAT HAPPENS WHEN WE ALL GO OFF AT ONCE.
BUT THAT ISN'T WHAT OCCURRED. YOU DIED AND NOTHING HAPPENED.
SURE IT DID. BUT THAT ME--ONE OF AN INFINITE NUMBER OF ME'S--DIED EARLY. FIRST, IN FACT.
IF WE'RE GOING TO THWART THEIR PLAN, YOU'RE GOING TO HAVE TO KILL A WHOLE LOT MORE OF ME...
AND SOON.
I'M NOT EVEN SURE I FIND ANY OF THIS BELIEVABLE.
YOU WILL. WHEN YOU REACH A HIGH ENOUGH THRESHOLD, YOU'LL START SEEING SOME REAL RESULTS FROM YOUR WORK.
THE BLUE AND RED SHIFT OF INCURSIONS.
HOW LONG DO YOU HAVE UNTIL YOU REACH YOUR FINAL TERMINAL STATE?
TWENTY-FIVE YEARS.
TWENTY-FIVE...
SUCCESS SEEMS UNLIKELY. AGAINST AN INFINITE NUMBER OF WORLDS, EVEN IF WE--
NOT **WE**. I'LL BECOME UNRELIABLE--FRACTURED--LONG BEFORE THAT. YOU'RE GOING TO HAVE TO DO THE HEAVY LIFTING YOURSELF.
IT'S IMPOSSIBLE FOR ONE MAN--EVEN DOOM--TO DO SUCH A THING.
I KNOW...
YOU NEED TO START A **RELIGION**.

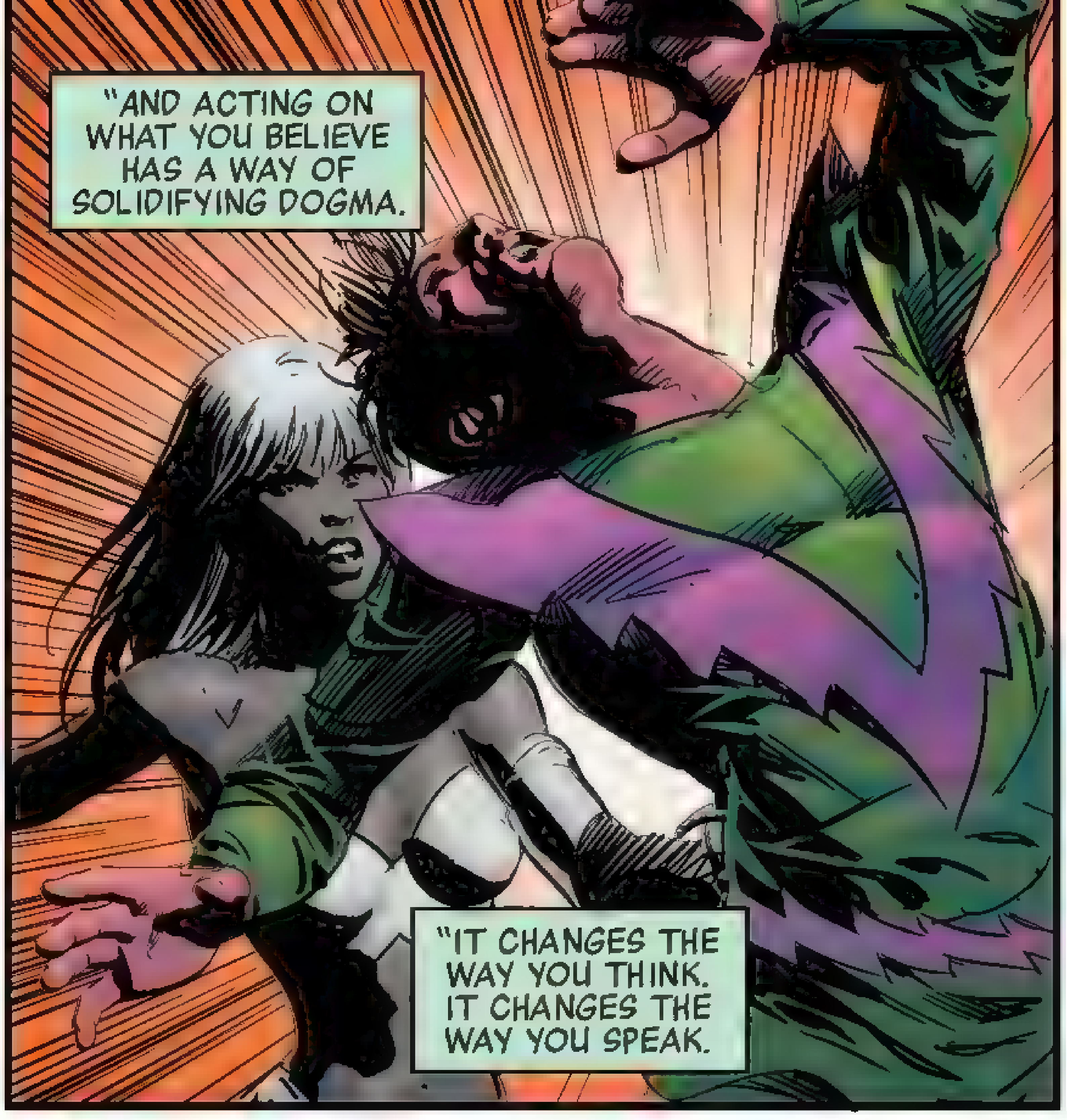
MISTER REECE...
YOUR AMBITION UNNERVES ME.
AMBITION IS THE ONLY THING THAT WE HAVE LEFT, VICTOR. IF YOU FAIL, EVERYTHING DIES...IF YOU SUCCEED, PERHAPS EVERYTHING WON'T...
EITHER WAY, IT ALL COMES DOWN TO YOU, SO YOU MUST PROTECT YOUR ANONYMITY--NO ONE MUST GUESS WHO THE GREAT DESTROYER REALLY IS...
AND HOW IT IS THAT HE KNOWS WHAT TO DO.
BECOME A MYTH. BECOME A ***LEGEND.***
BECOME A ***MURDERER...*** A SERIAL KILLER WHO ONLY KILLS ONE PERSON.
I SEE VERY LITTLE GLORY IN THIS, AND NO ROOM FOR GRACE.
YOU'LL FIND IT. FINDING ME, HOWEVER, WILL HAVE COMPLICATIONS.
SOME WILL BE EASY, BUT ON MANY EARTHS, LIFE IS VERY DIFFERENT--THAT WORLD'S HISTORY WILL BE UNKNOWN. BUT BEING POWERFUL ENOUGH TO CAUSE THE EARLY DEATH OF THE MULTIVERSE HAS ITS ADVANTAGES...
IF YOU CANNOT FIND ME ON A WORLD, FIND THE IDEA I HAVE MADE MANIFEST. THE ***MANIFOLD*** WILL SATISFY YOUR NEED.
SO I AM TO BE THE KNIFE...
YES.
PUT IT WHERE IT NEEDS TO GO.

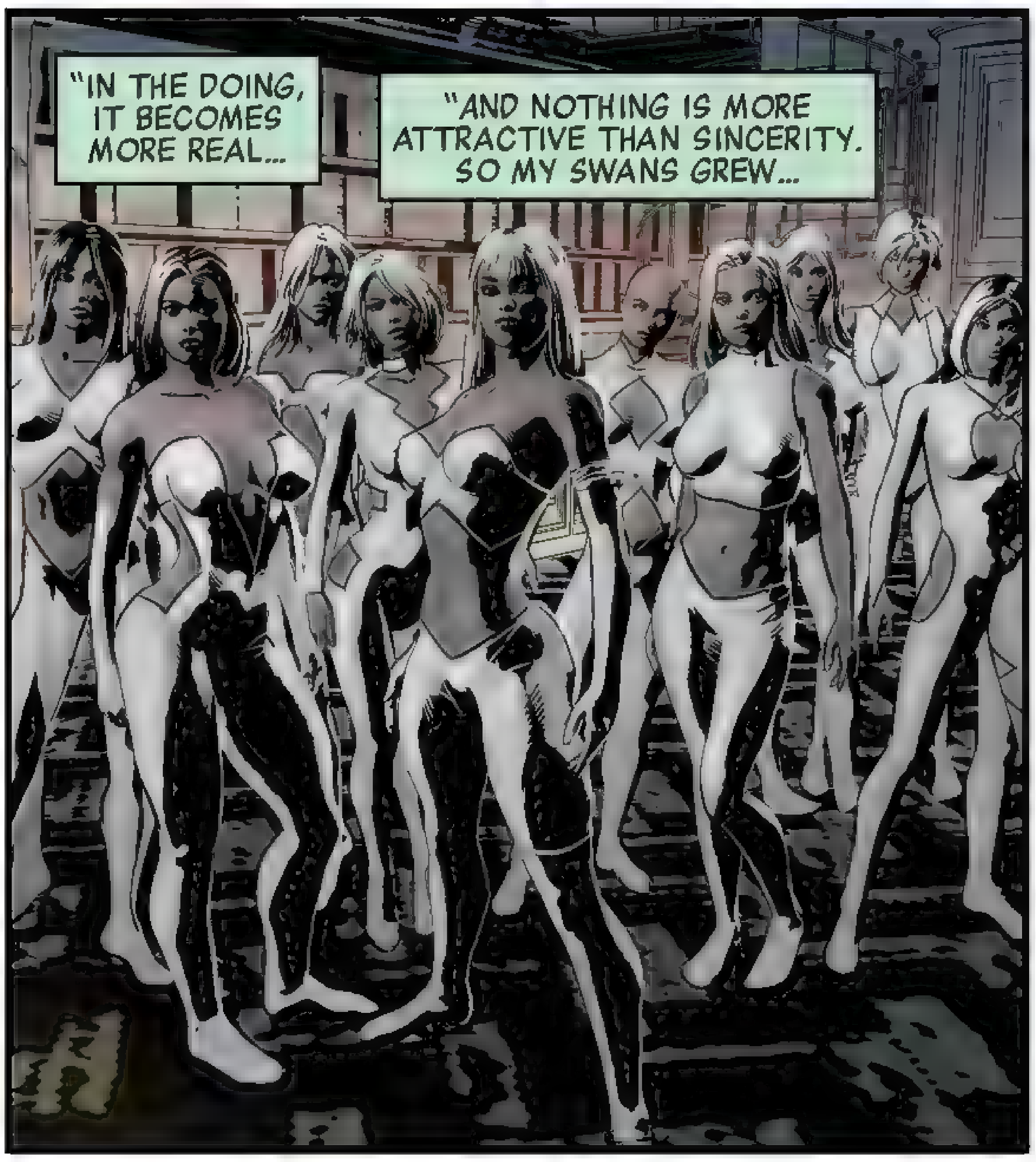
AARRGHHHHHH!
THE SKY WAS SO BLUE. THERE WAS A FLUFFY CLOUD IN THE HEAVENS THAT LOOKED LIKE--
=HURK!=
NO ONE CARES!
I HATE CLOUDS... CLOUDS... CLOUDS...
CLOUDS ARE MILLIONS AND MILLIONS OF PARTICLES OF VAPOR.
IN FIVE YEARS YOU'VE ONLY KILLED A THOUSAND OF ME, DOOM. DOOM. DOOM.
WHEN ARE WE GOING TO GET TO BILLIONS? WHEN ARE THINGS GOING TO START SMASHING TOGETHER...
"TOGETHER..."
HHUAARGGHHH!

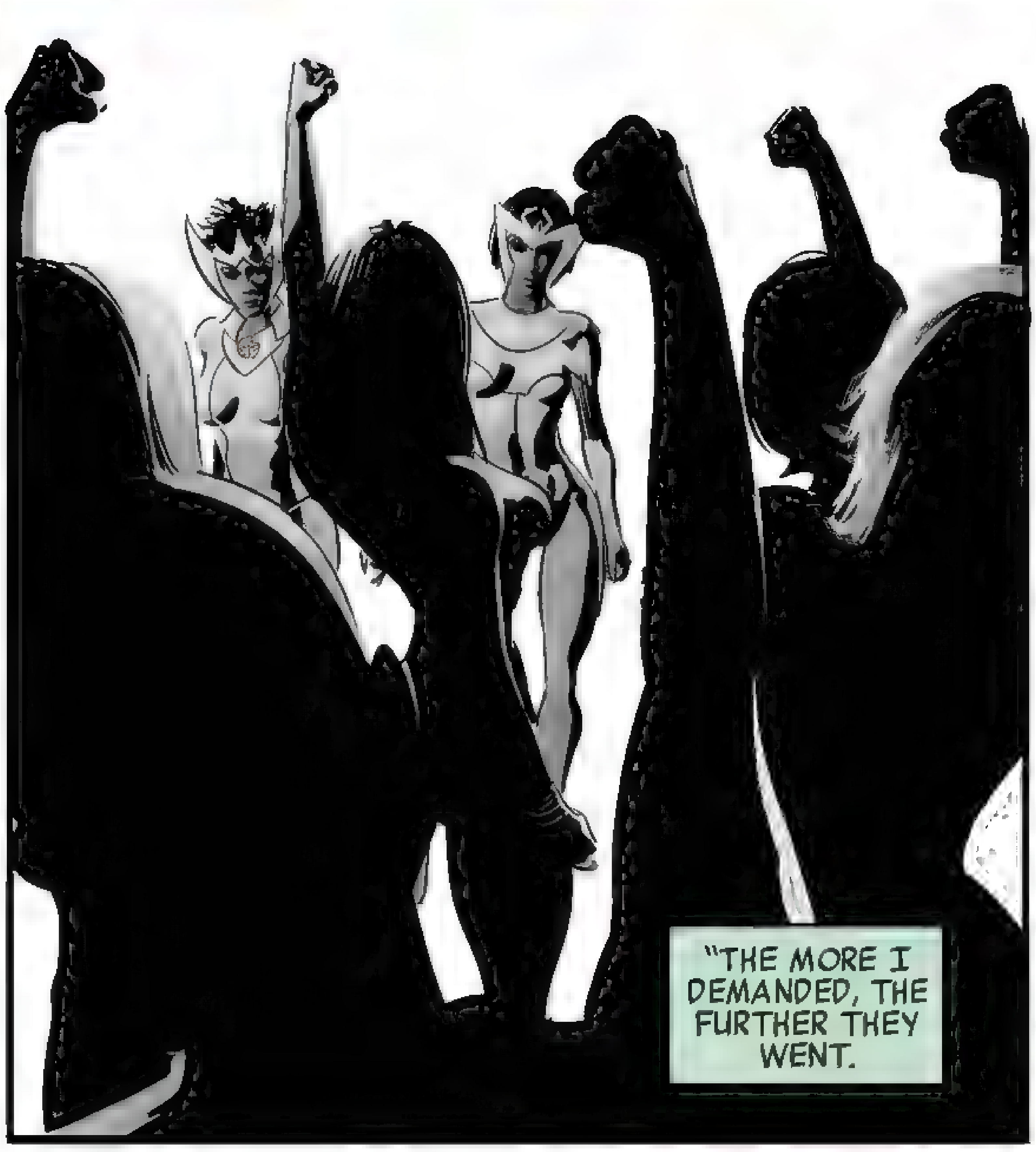
"TOGETHER...
EARTH-129061.
THEN.
"THE FIRST INCURSION OCCURRED AFTER SEVEN YEARS OF MURDERING MOLECULE MEN.

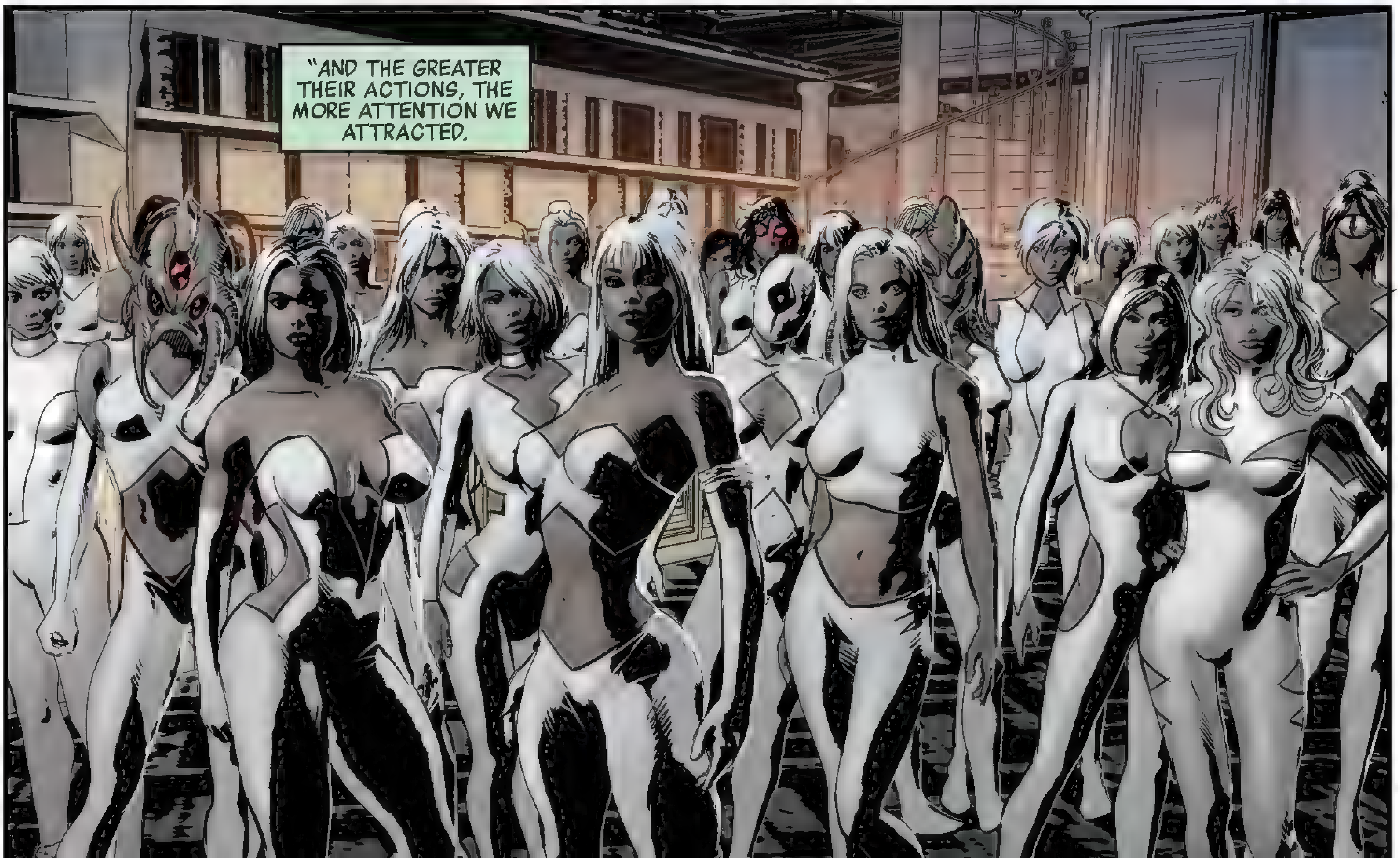
"IN YEAR EIGHT, I FOUND MY FIRST DISCIPLE.
"A SWAN."
I SAW YOU.
I SAW WHAT YOU DID.
WHY'D YOU HURT THAT MAN?
BECAUSE *THAT MAN* WAS UNWILLINGLY GOING TO HURT US ALL.
AND BECAUSE I HAVE GOTTEN VERY GOOD AT PUNISHING HIM FOR IT.
WHY ARE YOU OUT HERE ALONE, CHILD?
WHERE IS YOUR FAMILY?
FAMILY ALL DIED IN A SENTINEL CAMP.
I JUMPED AWAY AS FAR AS I COULD.
SO YOU'RE SPECIAL.
I AM.
AND DO YOU WANT ME TO TEACH YOU HOW TO STOP ANYONE FROM HURTING YOU EVER AGAIN?
YES.
EVEN IF IT HAS A COST?
YES.


"ONE QUICKLY BECAME THREE, AS FAITH IN A THING MAKES IT A FORCE MULTIPLIER...


"AND ACTING ON WHAT YOU BELIEVE HAS A WAY OF SOLIDIFYING DOGMA.
"IT CHANGES THE WAY YOU THINK. IT CHANGES THE WAY YOU SPEAK.


"IN THE DOING, IT BECOMES MORE REAL...
"AND NOTHING IS MORE ATTRACTIVE THAN SINCERITY. SO MY SWANS GREW...


"THE MORE I DEMANDED, THE FURTHER THEY WENT.


"AND THE GREATER THEIR ACTIONS, THE MORE ATTENTION WE ATTRACTED.

"TEN YEARS IN, THE BEYONDERS REALIZED SOMETHING WAS VERY WRONG, AND ATTEMPTED TO DEDUCE WHY THEIR GREAT EXPERIMENT WAS FAILING.
"IN THE SAME WAY THAT THEY INTRODUCED A SELF-DESTRUCT MECHANISM INTO THE FABRIC OF THE MULTIVERSE...
"THEY SPLICED A PROBLEM-SOLVING VIRUS INTO REAL SPACE...
"AND AS A RESULT, ANY SELF-AWARE ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE CAPABLE OF TRANSUNIVERSAL TRAVEL WOULD BE AUTOMATICALLY INFECTED.
"ITS VERY PROGRAMMING-- ITS ENTIRE MAKEUP-- CONSCRIPTED INTO THE BEYONDERS' CELESTIAL INQUIRY.
"THE MAPMAKERS AND THEIR SIDERA MARIS CHARTED WORLDS WHERE MOLECULE MEN HAD DIED.
"MARKING THE MOVEMENTS OF MY SWANS, SEEDING SACRIFICE WORLDS, AND PRESERVING FUTURE INCURSION WORLDS."

NOW.
AND SO, THAT IS THE GAME I HAVE BEEN PLAYING.
HUNTER. HUNTED.
AROUND AND AROUND UNTIL NOW.
VICTOR... THAT'S...
THAT'S... UNTHINKABLE.
SO, THE BLACK PRIESTS WERE ALSO SOME SORT OF PAWN IN THIS GAME, OR WHATEVER YOU MIGHT REFER TO IT AS?
NO. INTERESTINGLY, YOUR PRIESTS EMERGED AROUND THE SAME TIME AS THE MAPMAKERS.
IT'S DIFFICULT TO FATHOM THESE THINGS, BUT OVER THE YEARS I HAD COME TO BELIEVE THEY WERE SOME TYPE OF DEFENSIVE REACTION BY THE MULTIVERSE.
LOT OF FUSS FOR A DEAD END, BUT THEN AGAIN...
LOOK AT THE FUTILITY OF MAN. SOME PEOPLE SPEND THEIR WHOLE LIVES CHASING BUTTERFLIES.
AND THEY DON'T EVEN TASTE GOOD. SORRY THEY HAD TO GO. GO. GO.
WAIT.
BEFORE I LEFT EARTH, WITH REED AND THE OTHERS... WE HAD A BLACK SWAN WITH US.
WHICH WOULD MAKE HER ONE OF YOURS, BUT HER STORY WAS NOT YOUR STORY...

ALL APOSTATES BEGIN AS BELIEVERS, STEPHEN.
AND ALL SCHISMS COME FROM MISUNDERSTANDINGS...
"IT'S AN IDEA THAT YOU KNOW WELL...
"YOU HAVE ALWAYS HAD YOUR SANCTUM SANCTORUM. AND IN THE TEMPLE OF DOOM...
"...I HAD MY MOST HOLY OF HOLIES.
"THERE ARE SOME SECRETS THAT CAN BE TRUSTED TO NO ONE.
"WITH KNOWLEDGE COMES WISDOM, AND AS I BEGAN TO UNDERSTAND FULLY WHAT WAS BEING ASKED OF ME, I DEMANDED GREATER FAITH.

"THERE ARE THINGS THEY WERE NOT PERMITTED TO SEE.
"THE **FACE** OF RABUM ALAL. THE **GLORY** OF THE COMING RESURRECTION.
"BUT SOME DARED TO QUESTION...SOME DARED TO KNOW...
"AND, IN KNOWING, TURNED FROM MY TEMPLE, AND SOUGHT A DIFFERENT PATH.
"UNKNOWN TO THEM, THE SAME PATH AS THE BEYONDERS-- THE EARLY DEATH OF EVERYTHING."
WHAT HAPPENED, VICTOR?
WHAT DID YOU DO THAT MADE THEM TURN FROM YOU?

THERE WAS NOTHING DONE...
IT WAS SOMETHING *SEEN*. COME AND LOOK, STEPHEN...
WHAT IS...
OH!
STUDY AN ENEMY LONG ENOUGH, AND YOU LEARN HOW TO DEFEAT IT.
DO YOU SEE? DO YOU UNDERSTAND?
BY THE SEVEN HELLS OF THE FORGOTTEN LANDS...
HELLO. HELLO. HELLO.
IT'S GENIUS. IT'S INSANE.
IT'S PERFECT.

WHAT HAVE YOU DONE, VICTOR?
WHAT WAS NECESSARY.
I WENT WHERE THE ROAD LED ME.
HEY! IT'S GOT *MY* SEAL OF APPROVAL.
THUMBS. UP. UP. UP.
YOU SEE, AFTER QUITE SOME TIME, I BEGAN TO QUESTION THE OMNIPOTENCE OF MY ADVERSARY.
IF I WAS ABLE TO TRAVEL BACK IN TIME WITH MISTER REECE TO CONSTRUCT A PLAN TO DEFEAT THEM--AND EVEN IF IT APPEARED THAT PLAN WOULD BE SUCCESSFUL--COULDN'T THEY SIMPLY DO THE SAME THING...?
TRAVEL BACK IN TIME AND OVERPOWER ME AT THE GENESIS OF OUR CONTRARY MACHINATIONS?
PUTTING ASIDE GENERAL THEORIES OF ATEMPORALITY AND THE OVERSIMPLIFICATION OF PARADOX, I REALIZED ONE THING...

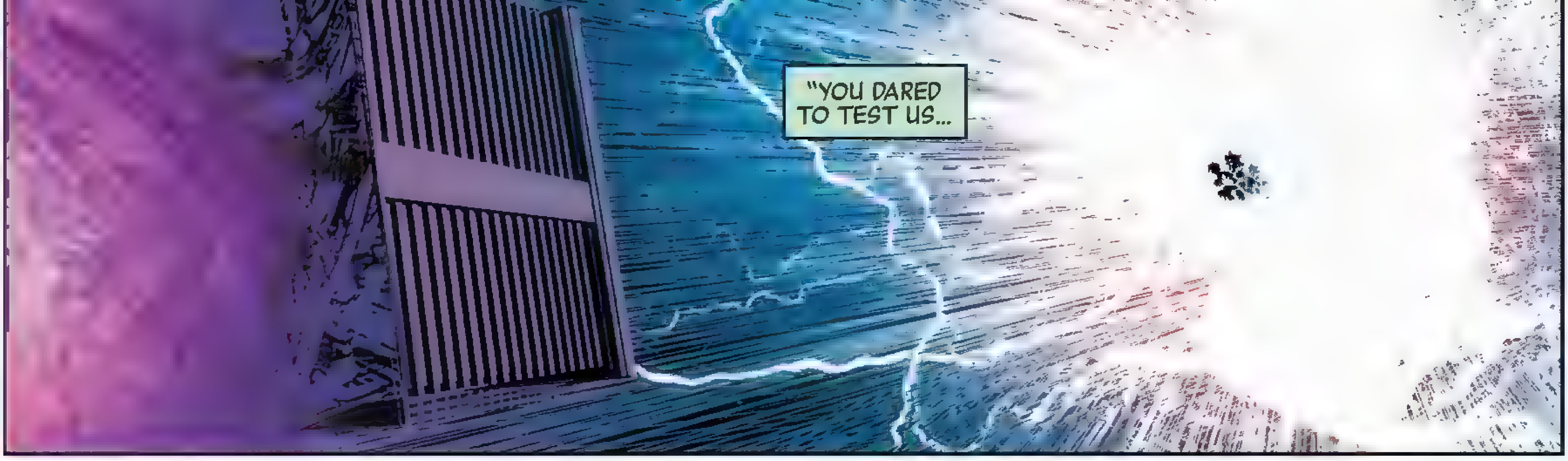
THEY COULD NOT.
IT'S THEIR ONE WEAKNESS.
THEY ARE *LINEAR.*
THE ALL-POWERFUL BEYONDERS ARE CONSTRAINED--RESTRICTED--TO THEIR OWN SEQUENTIAL TIMELINE.
WHICH MEANT THAT IF I COULD *TRULY* FIND A WAY TO *OPPOSE* THEM, I WOULD HAVE A CHANCE...
"AND NOW?
"NOW I BELIEVE I HAVE FOUND A WAY."

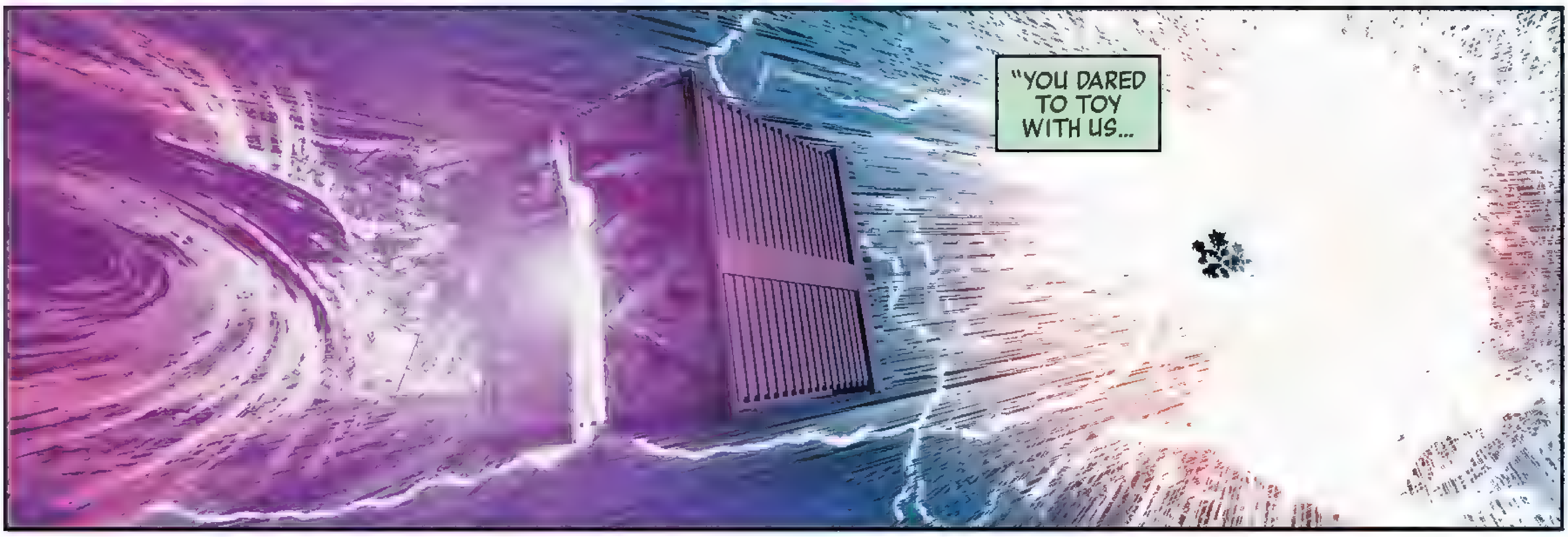
"I HAVE TO ASK, VICTOR...
WHOSOEVER HOLDS THIS HAMMER, IF HE BE UNWORTHY, SHALL POSSESS THE POWER OF THORR
"WHAT'S THE POINT?
"HOW IN ANY WAY IS WHAT YOU'RE DOING ANY BETTER THAN THEM IF THE END RESULT IS THE SAME?"
ASK YOURSELF, DOCTOR...
WOULD IT BE WORTH IT IF WE COULD AVOID OUR CERTAIN DOOM?
IF WE COULD SAVE... *SOMETHING?*
... YES.

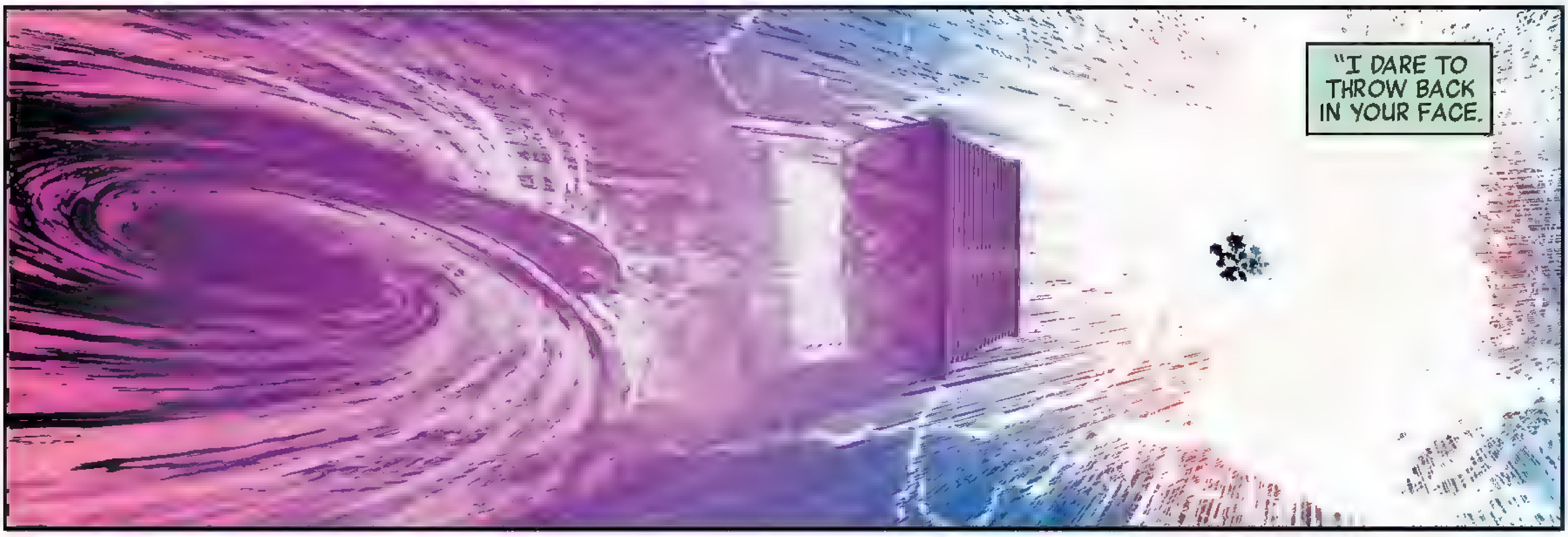
We are Beyond.
Dreamers. Destroyers. All of reality our whim.
Who dares stand before us?
I. DOOM.

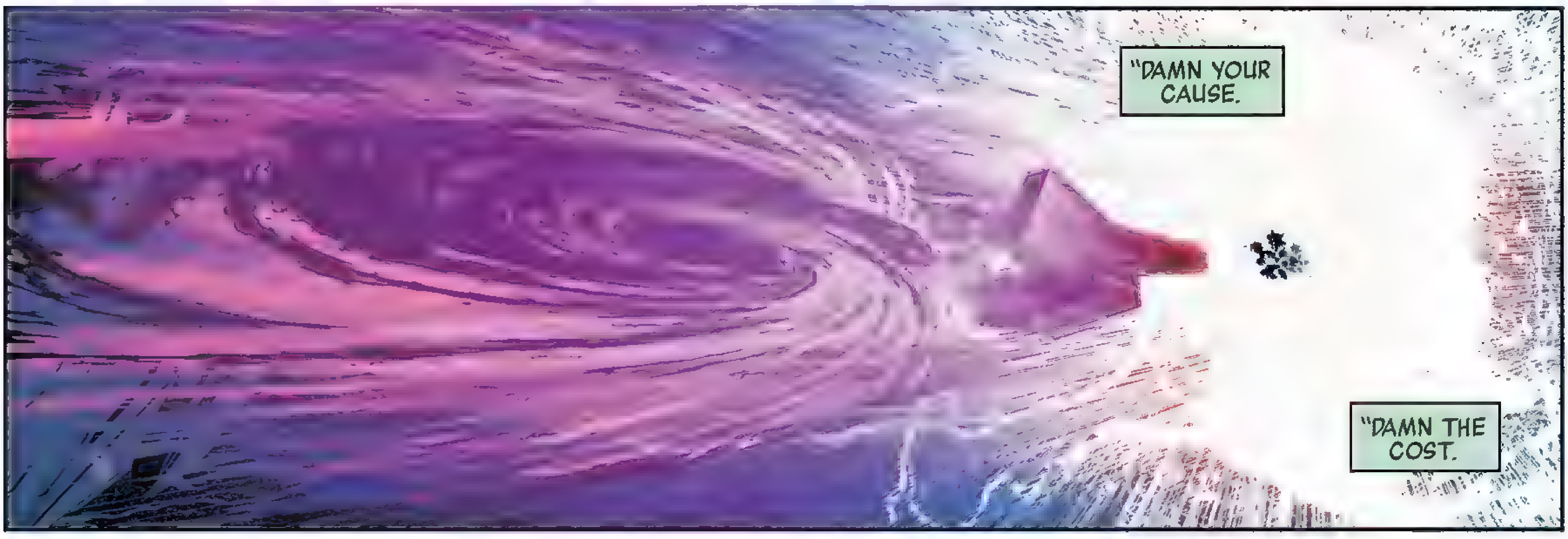
And what is this… Doom?
Some paltry man playing something more than what he is?
FOOLS. I AM *DOOM THE DESTROYER*…
I HAVE BROKEN WORLDS TO TAUNT YOU… I HAVE SHATTERED *UNIVERSES* TO MOCK YOU…
I HAVE TAKEN WHAT IS YOURS…
AND MADE IT *MINE.*
"FACE ME AT YOUR OWN PERIL, IF YOU DARE FACE ME AT ALL."
Doom.
For the short life left of everything, men and women will weep at the stories of what was done to you here this day…
AND *I* SAY, NO ONE WILL EVER HEAR THE WORD *BEYONDER* AGAIN…

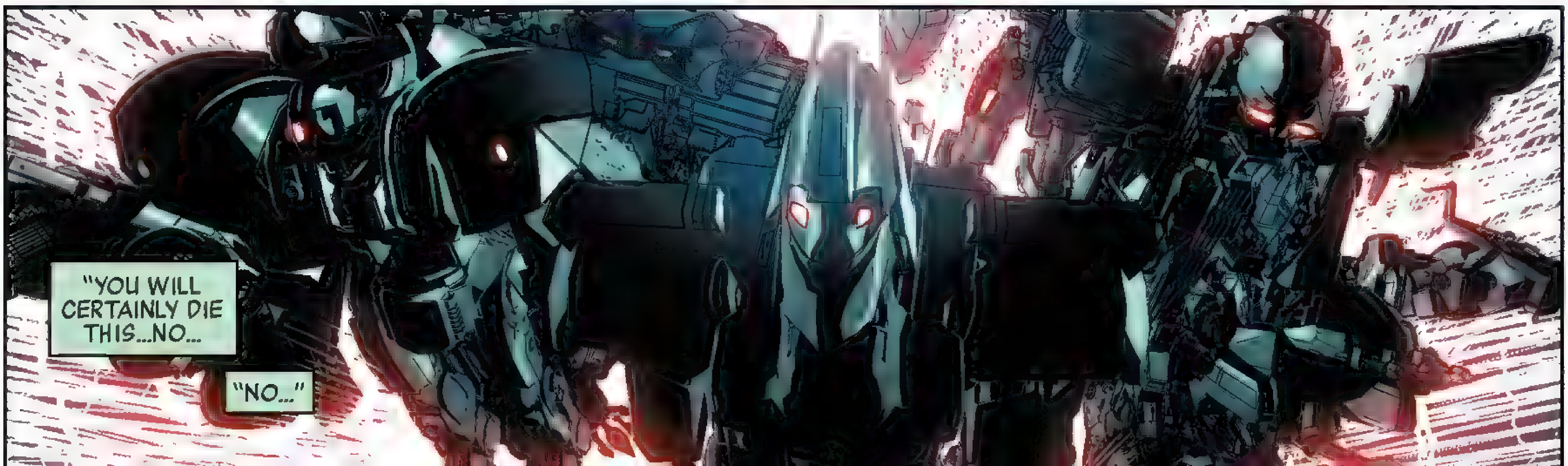
FOR I WILL ERASE YOUR NAME FROM HISTORY.


"YOU DARED TO TEST US...


"YOU DARED TO TOY WITH US...


"I DARE TO THROW BACK IN YOUR FACE.


"DAMN YOUR CAUSE.
"DAMN THE COST.


"YOU WILL CERTAINLY DIE THIS...NO...
"NO..."

NO!

THE NECROPOLIS.
WAKANDA.
MY GOD... DID YOU SEE THAT? IT JUST...
IT HAS TO BE A MISTAKE...
IT CAN'T BE...
DIAGNOSTICS SAY THE BRIDGE IS FULLY FUNCTIONAL. IT'S NOT A GHOST OR FLAWED READING...
THE DATA IS SOLID.
WHAT WE'RE SEEING IS CORRECT.
JUST LIKE THAT... WITHOUT ANY EXPLANATION...
THE NUMBER OF UNIVERSES WENT FROM HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS DOWN TO LESS THAN TWO DOZEN.
WE'RE OUT OF TIME. IT'S OVER...
ALL IS LOST.

“...AND ALL THAT’S LEFT IS ASHES”

NECROPOLIS.
TWO WEEKS AGO.
THERE HAS BEEN SOME DEBATE...
NO SMALL AMOUNT.
KFFF

THE CABAL IS GONE, AND WE'VE REACHED A...TENTATIVE TRUCE WITH ROGERS AND THE OTHERS.
IN FACT, THEY ARE COMING HERE NOW, AND TOGETHER WE WILL TEST THE LIMITS OF OUR NEWFOUND PEACE WITH TRUE STORIES OF THE END TIMES.
THE PROBLEM IS...FINDING YOU HERE WILL STOKE OLD FIRES.
BEST CASE SCENARIO IS WE TALK IT THROUGH. THE WORST IS FRESH AIR TO THE FLAMES, REIGNITING THE INFERNO.
THE POINT BEING, WE DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO WITH YOU, STARK.
WELL, I'D ENCOURAGE YOU TO THINK OUTSIDE THE BOX, T'CHALLA. GET RADICAL, AND LET ME THE HELL OUT OF HERE!

THE PROBLEM WITH THAT IS I DON'T KNOW THAT WE CAN *TRUST* YOU ANYMORE, ANTHONY.
LOOK AT WHAT YOU'VE DONE.
WHAT I'VE DONE?
WHAT I'VE DONE.
I THINK YOU MEAN... WHAT *WE'VE* DONE.
OH...WE'RE ALL EQUALS HERE, BUT WE *ARE NOT* THE SAME. SOME OF US KEPT OUR EYE ON WHAT MATTERED...
SOME OF US KEPT TRYING TO FIND A WAY, WHILE OTHERS GOT LOST IN THE WOODS.
NAMOR MADE HIS BED WITH THE CABAL. GOD KNOWS WHAT HAPPENED TO *STEPHEN*. BUT YOU...
YOU HAD TO GO TO ROGERS, AND THE CALAMITY THAT FOLLOWED BROUGHT A STORM DOWN ON TOP OF US.
NOW LOOK AT YOU. JUST *LOOK* HOW FAR YOU'VE FALLEN.
YES...I AM FALLEN.
I AM A SINNER...AND A CRIMINAL WANTED FOR HIGH CRIMES.
BUT DON'T FORGET, JUST LIKE ALL OF YOU...
I HAVE...LOST... *EVERYTHING.*
I WILL NOT DIE IN A CAGE. UNDERSTAND... BROTHERS?
KRSH
LET ME DIE FOR SOMETHING!
KRSH

SHRING
GO THEN, MY FRIEND...
DIE WELL.
AS THESE ARE THE DAYS FOR IT.

TWO HOURS AGO.
THIS IS A SMALL DISPLAY OF OUR TERRIBLE POWER...
ABOVE YOUR EARTH, A GREAT ARMADA OF GALACTIC EMPIRES HAS GATHERED TO DESTROY YOUR WORLD.
THIS...END IS UNAVOIDABLE.
A DARK SOLUTION TO A CELESTIAL PROBLEM THAT THREATENS EVERY LIVING THING IN OUR UNIVERSE.
BUT YOUR WORLD IS HOME TO HEROES...
GREAT MEN AND WOMEN WHO HAVE SAVED NOT ONLY YOUR WORLD BUT OTHERS, MANY, MANY TIMES...
IN GRATITUDE, WE GIVE TWO OF YOUR HOURS TO FULLY EMBRACE THIS UNFORTUNATE REALITY AND PREPARE YOURSELVES FOR THIS UNTIMELY END.

YOU HAVE OUR THANKS, PEOPLE OF EARTH. YOU WILL BE MISSED.
SO SAYS **GLADIATOR**, MAJESTOR OF THE SHI'AR EMPIRE.
YOUR TIME BEGINS NOW.
WELL, HE SOUNDS SERIOUS.
HE CERTAINLY DOES.
AND I SUPPOSE THIS WAS INEVITABLE.
BIG DIFFERENCE BETWEEN WHAT HE *THINKS* IS GOING TO HAPPEN AND WHAT ACTUALLY DOES.
ALERT S.H.I.E.L.D., AND I WANT PLANS OF ACTION IN THIRTY MINUTES.

CAN I CONFESS SOMETHING, RICHARDS?
OF COURSE.
WE ARE SURROUNDED BY TOTAL CHAOS-- I MEAN, AN ALL-ENCOMPASSING DISASTER OF *BIBLICAL PROPORTIONS*...
AND ALL I CAN THINK OF IS *HIM.*
TONY.
YES. I THINK ABOUT IT NOW, AND I REALLY DON'T UNDERSTAND HOW I EVER TRUSTED HIM.
I CAN'T SPEAK TO YOUR RELATIONSHIP, STEVE. THAT WAS YOURS AND HIS. BUT I CAN TALK ABOUT *MOTIVE*, WHICH IS WHERE I THINK ALL HIS PARTICULAR DEMONS LIE.
DESPITE THE PAST YEAR'S DIFFERENCES, IN REGARDS TO YOU AND ME...WELL, OUR MOTIVATIONS ARE PRETTY CLEAR. I AM DEFINED BY MY FAMILY, THE PURPOSE OF EVERYTHING I DO CAN BE DISTILLED BACK DOWN TO THAT. AND YOU...
YOU ARE A GOOD MAN. YOU DO...GOOD THINGS.
TONY, HOWEVER, IS NOT AS SIMPLE AS US. HE'S A FUTURE MAN TRAPPED IN THE NOW. A PRISONER RAGING AGAINST THE SLOW CRAWL OF HUMAN EVOLUTION.
HIS RELATIONSHIPS, HIS MORALITY, HIS ETHICS...ALL OF THESE ARE HIGHLY ADAPTABLE. MALLEABLE TO WHAT HE WOULD CALL THE GREATER GOOD OF MANKIND'S NECESSARY SURVIVAL AND UNDENIABLE PROGRESS.
WHAT IS THIS?
IT'S TONY, IN A NUTSHELL.
IT'S FRACTIONAL, BUT I *AM* SMARTER THAN HE IS. HOWEVER, I HAVE A TENDENCY TO BE SINGLE-MINDED. ONE PROBLEM: ONE SOLUTION.
MISTER STARK, ON THE OTHER HAND, IS THIS WORLD'S GREATEST MULTITASKER. HE CAN FOCUS ON ONE PROBLEM-- SAY, THE END OF OUR UNIVERSE--
"AND AT THE SAME TIME BE WORKING ON ANOTHER."
JUPITER
WE'VE GOT ACCESS, STEVE. WE'RE GOOD TO GO.
OKAY.
LAUNCH IT.

"IT'S STAGGERING, REALLY. THAT ABILITY OF HIS...
"I REMEMBER WHEN HE TOLD ME HE'D FINISHED THIS. IT WAS THE SAME WEEK WE'D FINALIZED SOME MULTIVERSAL ENHANCEMENTS TO THE BRIDGE.
"NOT AN EASY THING TO DO.
"BUT AT THE SAME TIME WE'D BEEN WORKING ON THAT, HE'D CREATED, INSTALLED AND PERFECTED AN AUTOMATED CONTROL SYSTEM FOR THE *PLANETKILLER* WE'D CAPTURED BACK DURING THE BUILDER WAR.
"HE'S JUST NOT LIKE US, STEVE.
"HE'S NOT."

THEN.
I CAN'T DO IT. I CAN'T... THESE ARE MY PEOPLE.
EVERYONE I LOVE IS HERE.
I AM LOYAL TO YOU-- I AM LOYAL TO THE EMPIRE...
BUT THERE IS A LINE, AND THIS IS IT.
ANYTHING BUT THIS, MAJESTOR, ANYTHING. WHAT ELSE WOULD YOU HAVE ME DO?
NOTHING YOU ARE NOT. THERE WAS A TIME I MADE THE SAME CHOICE YOU HAVE, AND ALL IT GAVE ME WAS A THRONE.
FIGHT WELL, SUPERGUARDIAN. YOU HAVE DONE YOUR WORLD PROUD... FAREWELL.
NOW.
OKAY. I'M BEGINNING TO THINK I MIGHT HAVE MADE MISTAKE.
THIS IS OUR BEST LAST HOPE, IZZY...
ONLY THE BIG FAT WALLET OF DA COSTA INTERNATIONAL CAN SAVE US NOW.
YEAH. I NEED SOMETHING MORE.

I HAVE AN IDEA. I MEAN, IF WE'RE TALKING WORST CASE SCENARIOS...
I'VE SURVIVED-- WE **BECAME**--IN THE DEAD SPACE OF EXTINCT UNIVERSES...AND WE'VE GOT ROOM TO GROW. MY HULL WILL EVENTUALLY EXPAND TO DOUBLE THIS SIZE.
IT'S NOT PERFECT, BUT IT'LL HAVE TO DO FOR NOW...
IF IT LOOKS BAD, DIAL UP THE AUGER AND RUN. I DON'T KNOW IF MY EXOSUIT CAN SURVIVE IN THAT ENVIRONMENT, BUT I'LL BE RIGHT BEHIND YOU.
OKAY. BE BRAVE, KIDDO.
MUBBA
WHAT'S THE WORD, GUYS? ARE WE READY TO GO?
YES, SIR, BUT IT'S GOING TO BE TRICKY. THE GRID IS LOW YIELD--REALLY, IT'LL JUST LOOK LIKE ALL THE OTHER SPACE JUNK ORBITING THE PLANET...
BUT WHEN WE POWER ON THE GEOTHERMAL DRIVE, WE'LL NEED TO BE ACTIVE RIGHT AWAY...
A POWER SIGNATURE THAT LARGE WILL DRAW ATTENTION. I GUESS WHAT I'M SAYING IS...
IF WE TURN THE WEAPON ON, WE HAVE TO USE IT *IMMEDIATELY*.
WELL, THAT DECISION'S BEEN MADE. WE JUST GOT THE SIGNAL FROM THE OTHERS.
ALL RIGHT.
DO IT.

"THE TWENTY ORBITING SATELLITES LAUNCHED BY DA COSTA TELECOM WERE SECRETLY PART OF AN EXPERIMENTAL A.I.M. THERMAL NET.
"A SUPERWEAPON CAPABLE OF CHANNELLING THE POWER OF THE EARTH INTO A CONCENTRATED NiFe DISCHARGE."
"MORE THAN ENOUGH TO DESTROY A SHI'AR FRIGATE OR AN ANNIHILATION MAMMOTH."
FIRING NOW!
ZZRNNNNNNNNNNNNNN

WHAT WAS THAT?
SIX SHIPS LOST, MAJESTOR-- IT CAME FROM THE PLANET.
DIRECTED THERMAL VENT. WE WERE UNAWARE THEY HAD THIS CAPABILITY...
WE SHAME OURSELVES, MENTOR.
HOW MANY TIMES WILL WE UNDERESTIMATE THE HUMANS?
STATUS REPORT?
MAJESTOR!
A MASSIVE SIGNATURE HAS JUST JUMPED IN-SYSTEM...

"IT'S RIGHT ON TOP OF THE ARMADA."
HA! IT'S WORKING.
WE'VE GOT THEM SANDWICHED BETWEEN US. WE'LL KEEP THEM OFF EARTH...
...WHILE **WE** PICK THEM OFF.

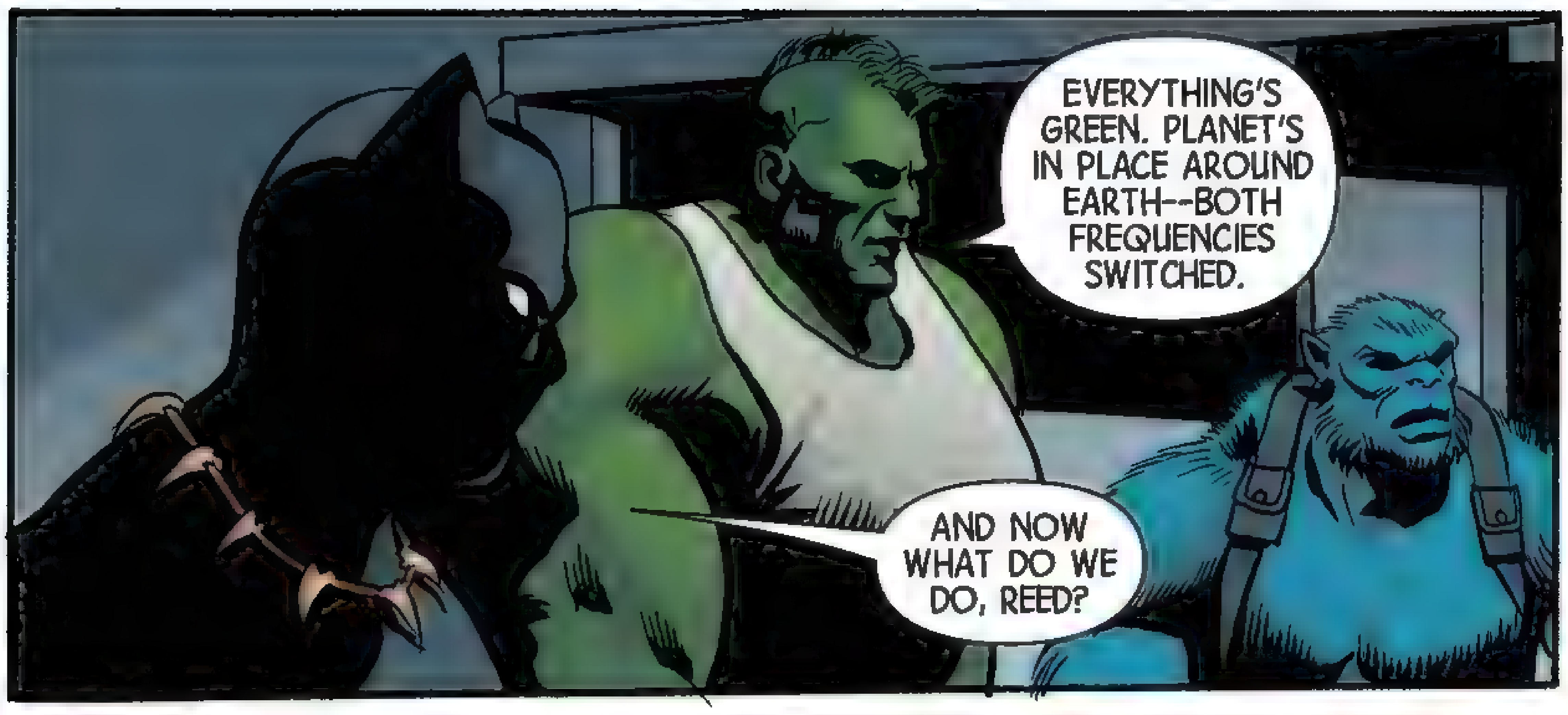
MAJESTOR! OUR POSITION IS DETERIORATING...
WE STILL HAVE A LARGE NUMERICAL ADVANTAGE, BUT THEY ARE HURTING US BADLY.
WE *WILL* EVENTUALLY PREVAIL, BUT I *CANNOT* PROJECT THAT WE WILL STILL HAVE ENOUGH COLLECTIVE FIREPOWER TO DESTROY THE PLANET.
FOCUS EVERYTHING ON THE PLANETKILLER. SEND EVERYTHING AT IT.
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
SYSTEM THRESHOLDS ARE APPROACHING CRITICAL... IF WE DON'T SHUT DOWN THIS FACILITY, WE COULD LOSE EVERYTHING.
IF WE STOP NOW, WE *WILL* LOSE EVERYTHING. KEEP FIRING!

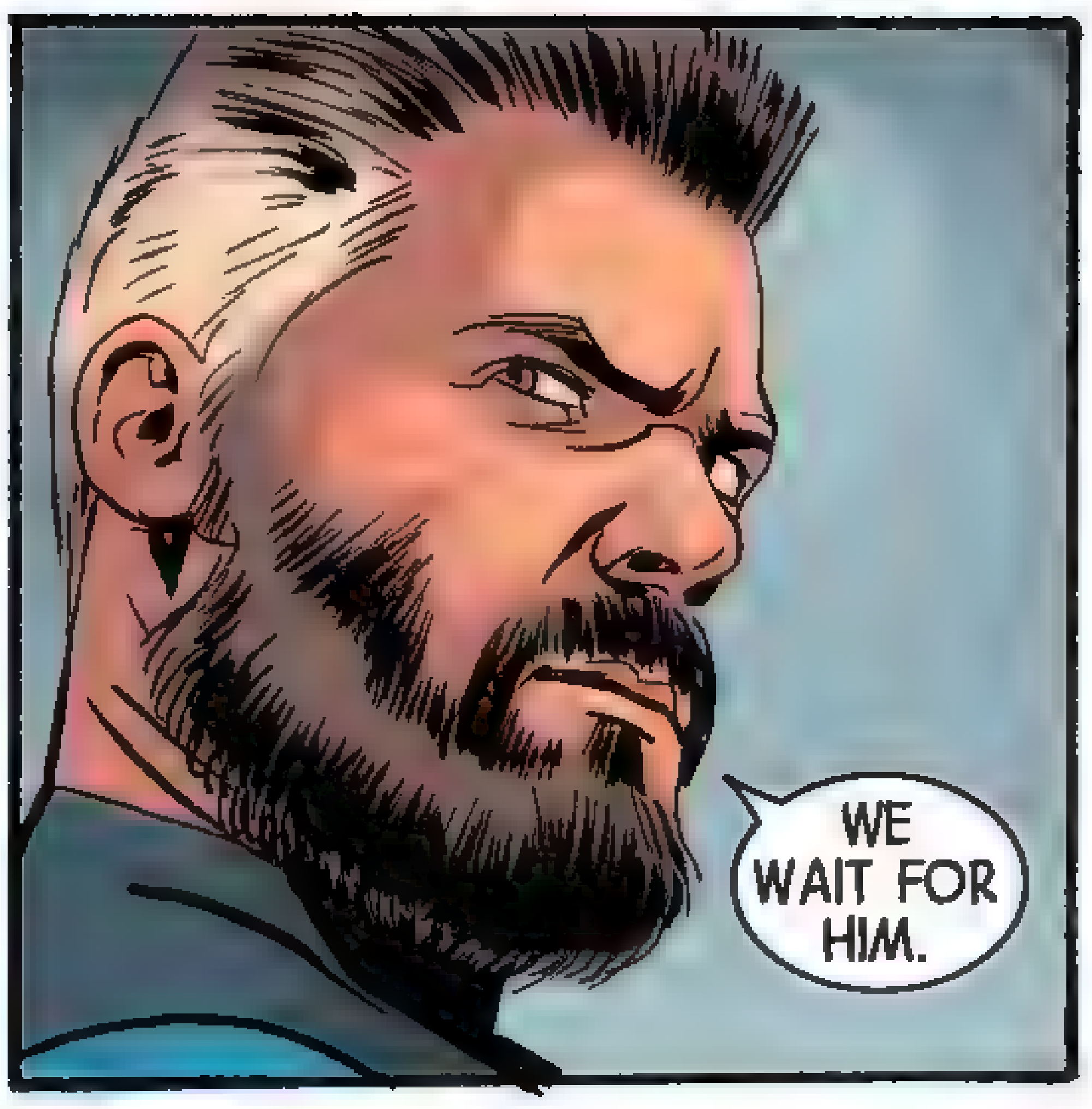
BA-BOOOM
OKAY...OKAY. YEAH, WE SHOULD'VE STOPPED FIRING.
JUST AS I FEARED. WE LOST THE DYNAMO, SIR...
THE WEAPON SYSTEM IS OFFLINE.
WE HAVE TO TELL THE OTHERS.
EARTHSIDE IS DOWN, AND A HUGE CHUNK OF THE ARMADA IS MOVING TOWARDS OUR SHIP.
TOWARDS? WHY WOULD THEY DO THAT?
OPPORTUNITY, MAJESTOR.
THE PLANETARY WEAPON HAS GONE DARK AND OUR FORCES ARE IN POSITION.
VERY WELL, MENTOR...
SEND FORTH THE *ANNIHILATION WAVE.*

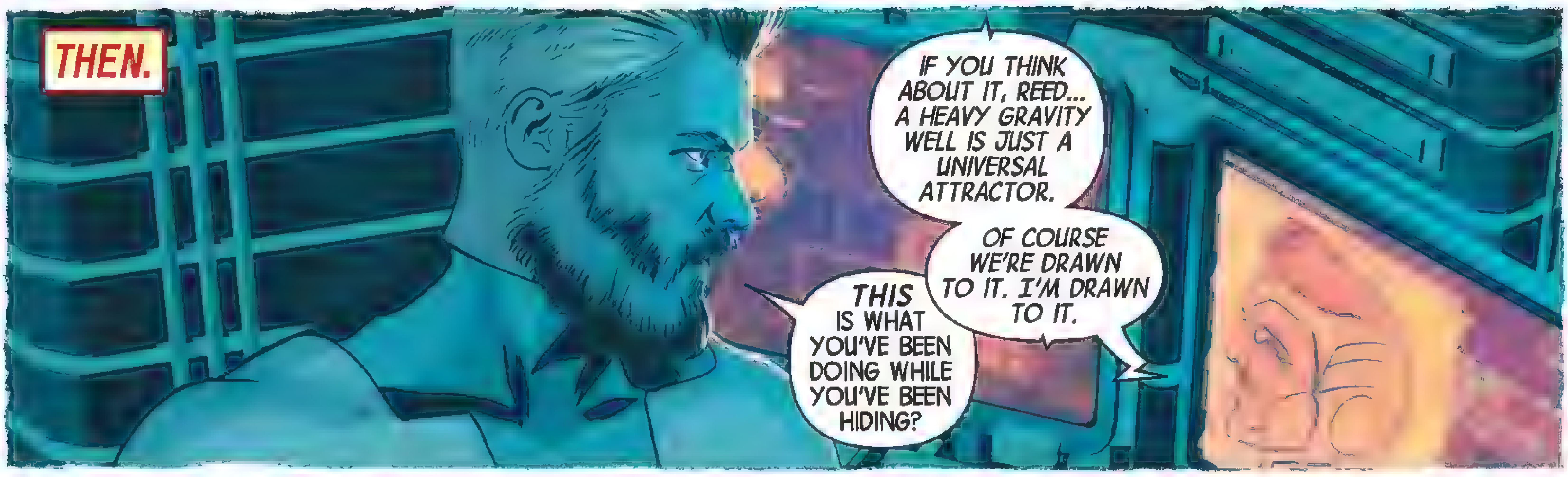
YESSSSSS YESSSSSSS
SSSSWEET DEATH BRINGSSSS RESSSURRECTION
THOOM
THOOM
THOOM
THOOM
THOOM
BOOM

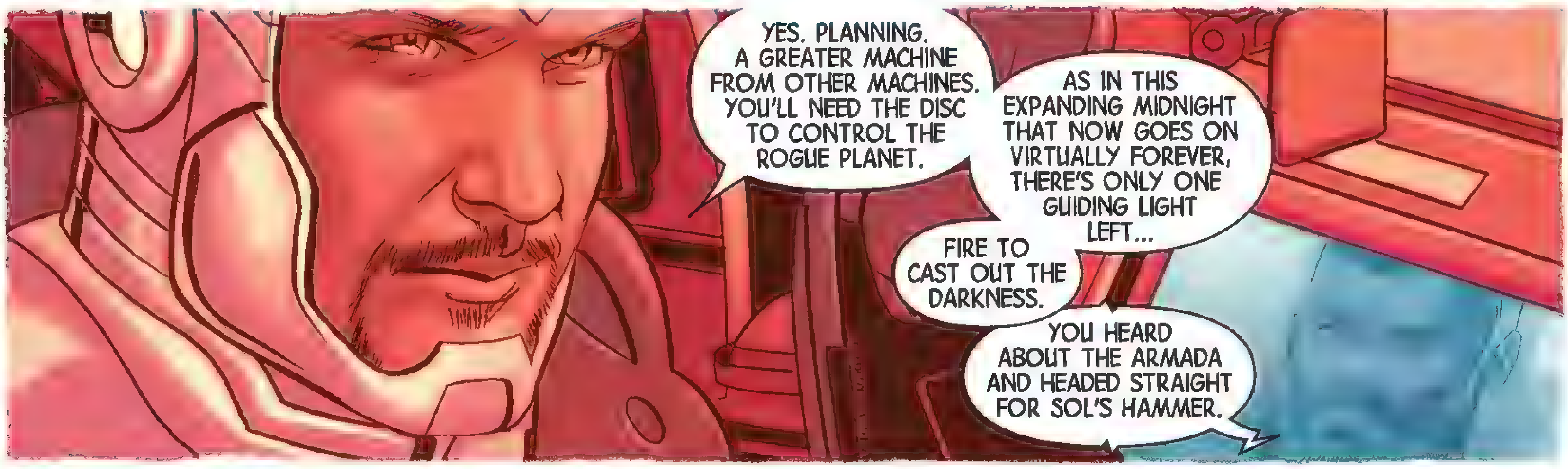
IT'S OVER.
WE'RE DONE.
THE HUMAN FORCES HAVE BEEN SUBDUED, GLADIATOR.
THE WORLD IS YOURS.
THEY FOUGHT WELL, BUT THIS TIME THEY WERE ON THE WRONG SIDE OF FATE.
FORM UP THE FLEET...
DESTROY THE PLANET.

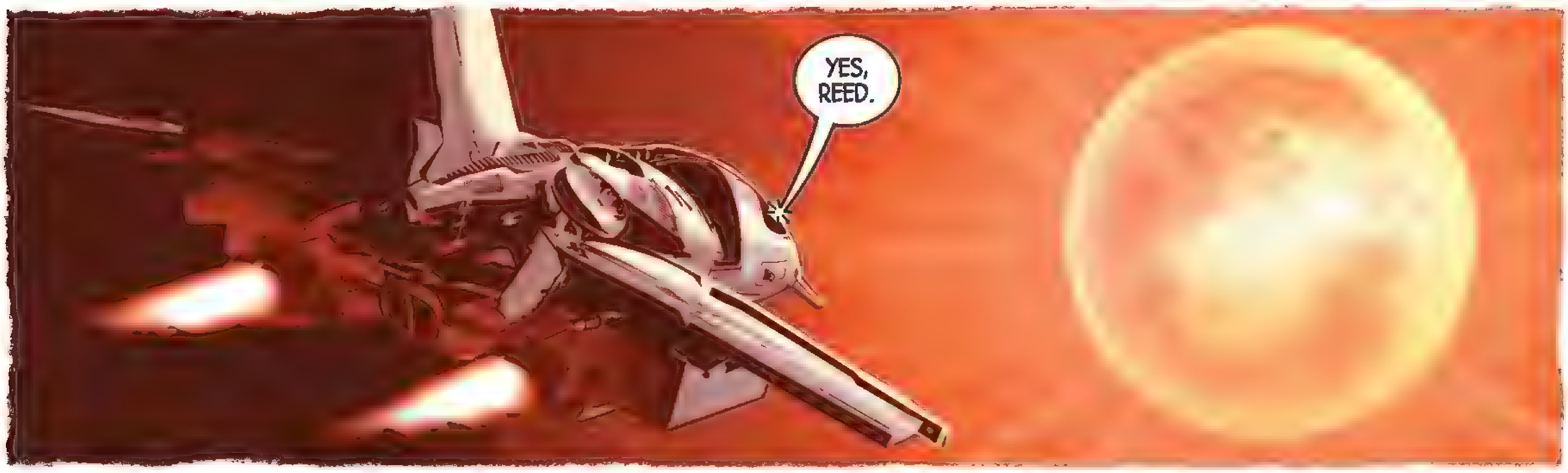
THE CONTROL DISC OF THE ROGUE PLANET.
EVERYTHING LOOKS GOOD.
THE PLANET'S STILL OUT OF PHASE--THE CONTROL DISC IS RUNNING SMOOTHLY.
MIGHT BE A GOOD TIME TO TALK ABOUT WHETHER OR NOT THIS IS A GOOD IDEA.
WE'LL TALK AFTER--WE'RE ON THE CLOCK.
"PHASING IN THE ROGUE PLANET."

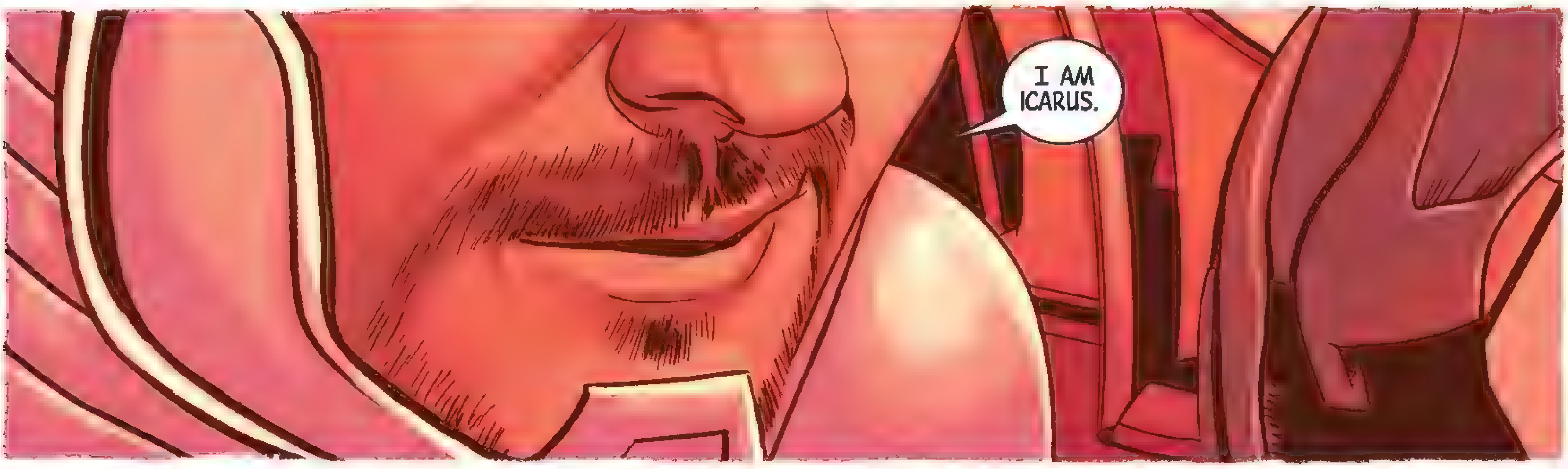

EVERYTHING'S GREEN. PLANET'S IN PLACE AROUND EARTH--BOTH FREQUENCIES SWITCHED.
AND NOW WHAT DO WE DO, REED?


WE WAIT FOR HIM.


THEN.
IF YOU THINK ABOUT IT, REED... A HEAVY GRAVITY WELL IS JUST A UNIVERSAL ATTRACTOR.
THIS IS WHAT YOU'VE BEEN DOING WHILE YOU'VE BEEN HIDING?
OF COURSE WE'RE DRAWN TO IT. I'M DRAWN TO IT.


YES. PLANNING. A GREATER MACHINE FROM OTHER MACHINES. YOU'LL NEED THE DISC TO CONTROL THE ROGUE PLANET.
AS IN THIS EXPANDING MIDNIGHT THAT NOW GOES ON VIRTUALLY FOREVER, THERE'S ONLY ONE GUIDING LIGHT LEFT...
FIRE TO CAST OUT THE DARKNESS.
YOU HEARD ABOUT THE ARMADA AND HEADED STRAIGHT FOR SOL'S HAMMER.


YES, REED.


I AM ICARUS.

"YOU *DO* KNOW THE POINT OF THAT STORY IS THAT HE FLEW TOO CLOSE TO THE SUN, RIGHT?"
"DO YOU KNOW WHO THINKS THAT WAY, REED?"
PEOPLE WHO HAVE NEVER FLOWN.

"ONE WAS LIFE. ONE WAS DEATH."

TEXAS. MONTHS AGO.
BURGER SHACK
J'S
STAY HERE UNLESS I CALL FOR YOU...
...OR UNLESS I CAN'T.
I THOUGHT YOU TOLD ME A LONG TIME AGO THAT YOU COULDN'T EAT BEFORE A BIG TO-DO...
NERVOUS STOMACH, OR SOMETHING LIKE THAT. AND IT'S LUNCHTIME, AND YOU'RE EATING FRENCH TOAST.

WELL, ONE, I'M NOT NERVOUS.
AND TWO, *THEY SAY* IT'S THE MOST IMPORTANT MEAL OF THE DAY.
YOU SHOULD ORDER SOMETHING.
J's BURGER SHACK
TONY...
WHY ARE WE HERE?
WE'RE GOING TO BREAK BREAD, STEVE.
THEN I'M GOING TO TALK, YOU'RE GOING TO LISTEN, I'M GOING TO CONVINCE YOU WHY I'M RIGHT, AND THEN...YOU'RE GOING TO FORGIVE ME FOR NOT DOING A BETTER JOB THE FIRST TIME.
SO, *PLEASE* ORDER SOMETHING.
WHAT CAN I GET YOU, SIR?
COOK MAKES A MEAN BURGER-- I'M KINDA PARTIAL TO THE SHRIMP AND GRITS, BUT HONESTLY, MOST EVERYTHING'S GOOD. DO YOURSELF A FAVOR, THOUGH, AND DON'T OVERDO IT--
YOU'LL WANNA SAVE ROOM FOR DESSERT. THE PIE'S TO DIE FOR.
REALLY. I'M FINE.
NONSENSE.
HE'LL HAVE A BURGER.

SO...CAN I JUST TALK FOR A BIT? WILL YOU PROMISE YOU'LL LISTEN?
THE ONLY THING I'LL PROMISE IS THAT WHEN WE'RE DONE HERE, YOU'RE COMING BACK WITH ME.
YOU DON'T REALIZE HOW ALL OF THIS HAS BEEN PERCEIVED.
THE PRESIDENT. OTHER WORLD LEADERS. THE ENTIRE U.N....THEY'RE READY TO ACT, AND I HAVE NO IDEA WHAT THEY'RE GOING TO DO.
THE ENTIRE U.N....
IT'S A WONDER I CAN SLEEP AT NIGHT.
I DON'T GET IT. YOU PLAN FOR EVERYTHING...
...SO WHY WON'T YOU CONSIDER WHAT IT MEANS IF YOU *FAIL?*
THIS IS THE PART YOU CAN'T SEEM TO GET THROUGH YOUR HEAD, STEVE. I *HAVE* THOUGHT ABOUT IT...
IF WE FAIL, THEN *EVERYTHING DIES.* HOW CAN YOU STILL NOT UNDERSTAND THAT?
WHY ARE WE DIVIDED ON THIS WHEN NAMOR AND HIS BAND OF MONSTERS ARE OUT THERE DOING GOD KNOWS WHAT?
THOSE MONSTERS ARE DOING THE EXACT SAME THING YOU WERE DOING.
WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU?

HERE YOU GO... ENJOY.
SO THAT'S IT, STEVE, ISN'T IT?
THE VERY HEART OF IT...YOU REALLY DO THINK I'M A BAD GUY. THAT YOUR FRIEND IS GONE--LOST--AND HAS BEEN REPLACED BY WHATEVER I AM NOW.
YOU SHOULD TAKE A CLOSER LOOK AT THE KIND LADY WHO HAS BROUGHT YOU YOUR FOOD.
WHY WOULD...
HUH. I DIDN'T RECOGNIZE...
IS THAT YOU, TAMARA?
YES, I'M TAMARA. HAVE WE MET?
OF *COURSE* WE HAVE, WHY ELSE WOULD YOU KNOW MY NAME?
YOU'LL HAVE TO FORGIVE ME. I HAD AN ACCIDENT AND MY MEMORY...
WELL, IT AIN'T ALL THERE. MY SWEET DAUGHTER IS HAVING TO REMIND ME OF ALL KINDS OF THINGS ALL THE TIME.
NO MIRACLE UNDER THE SUN QUITE AS SPECIAL AS SOMEONE LOOKING OUT FOR YOU.
YOU FOUND HER DAUGHTER.
I DID. WASN'T THAT MONSTROUS?
...
NO, IT WASN'T. IT'S THE KIND OF THING THAT USED TO BLOW ME AWAY. BILLIONAIRE SWEATING THE SMALL STUFF.
THE IMPORTANT THINGS. ARE WE REALLY GOING TO FIND SOME WAY OUT OF THIS?
I KNOW WE CAN.]

DON'T LIE.
DON'T DO THAT...
DON'T SEED HOPE WHERE THERE IS NONE.
YOU PROMISED US A GREAT MACHINE OF SALVATION, YET BUILT NO SUCH THING.
DO YOU KNOW WHAT LASTING THING YOU BUILT, ANTHONY STARK?

NOTHING.
A HOUSE BUILT ON LIES.
I AM DYING, STARK...
THE UNIVERSE IS DYING.
WE ALL ARE.
AND YOU HAVE KNOWN IT ALL ALONG.

THE ROGUE PLANET.
NOW.
THE LAST AVENGERS.
THE END OF DAYS.
PHASE INVERSION COMPLETE, TONY...

THE EARTH HAS MOVED INTO THE SPACE PREVIOUSLY OCCUPIED BY THE ROGUE PLANET...AND IT HAS MOVED INTO EARTH PHASE.
WE'RE AS SHIELDED AS WE'RE GOING TO GET. ARE YOU SURE YOU WANT TO DO THIS?
WHAT CHOICE DO I HAVE?
THEY WERE GOING TO DO THE SAME TO US.
THESE ARE ALL THE CHOICES WE HAVE LEFT-- *BAD ONES.*
I'M CYCLING ON SOL'S HAMMER. PUSHING IT AS FAR AS IT WILL GO...
MAJESTOR!
SOMETHING'S WRONG! WE'RE DETECTING AN ENERGY SPIKE FROM THE LOCAL STAR.

I TOLD MYSELF THAT I WOULD NEVER BUILD WEAPONS AGAIN.
SHARRA AND K'YTHRI SAVE US.
FOR THE LAST YEAR, THAT'S ALL I'VE DONE.
I HAD FORGOTTEN JUST HOW GOOD I WAS AT IT.
HOLD ON, REED. THE HAMMER IS CHARGED.
FIRING...
...NOW.

TALENT IS TALENT...
AND IF YOU HAVE A GIFT, IT'S IMPOSSIBLE TO HIDE IT.
IF I'M TELLING THE TRUTH, I'M NOT EVEN TRYING TO ANYMORE.
HE DESTROYED ALMOST THE ENTIRE FLEET...
IT WORKED.
YES, IT DID...

"IT'S SAFE TO PHASE THE EARTH BACK INTO NORMAL SPACE...
"IRON MAN SAVED US...
"JUST IN TIME, TOO...
"I MEAN, REALLY, WHO *DOESN'T* WANT TO STICK AROUND FOR THE APOCALYPSE?"

EARTH-1610. THEN.
THE CITY.
A technological city pops up in the middle of nowhere, and we find it because the boy genius Reed Richards summons us...
I've got a bad feelin' about this, Nick.
See what he's wearin', Hawkeye? You better double it.
Gentlemen, if the total state of alarm wasn't clearly visible on your faces...
Your spiking body temps and increased breathing would absolutely give you away.
You're upset.
You sayin' we shouldn't be? That little talk we had about preparing for the things out there the world ain't ready for--
--did you know I was talkin' to you about *you*?
But you weren't, General Fury. And, in fact, you were more right that you knew.

What would you say if I told you for the last year I've been saving the world from an external threat that meant not just to kill our *planet...*
...but our entire universe?
Uh, thanks?
If you're tellin' the truth--and I don't think you are--then, sure, appreciation would be in order...
...followed quickly by proof... followed just as fast by an explanation.
I called you here for just that purpose, General. Please...
...step inside.
City?
Yes, Maker?
How long do we have?
A little over one hour.
Perfect. Thank you.

General Fury. Hawkeye. I'd like to introduce you to Thanos and Maximus.
Foreboding, yes...*concerning*, probably...but the really interesting thing about these two is that they come from another universe.
Is that so?
IT IS. GOT HERE BY THE SKIN OF OUR TEETH, TOO.
Well, good to have you. Do either of you have any idea what's going on here?
OF COURSE WE DO, HUMAN.
AN INCURSION OF WORLDS IS NIGH.
Someone want to tell me what the purple guy is talking about?
It's the reason you're here.
But to fully answer that question, it's going to take some doing.
RUMBLERUMBLERUMBLERUMBLE
What the hell?
And a verbal explanation would, uh, leave a lot to be desired. You're going to need to see it with your own eyes. Eye. Whatever.
I'm just saying, for you to fully understand...

"...we're going to have to take a bit of a trip."

EARTH-616.
THE WHITE HOUSE. NOW.
YOU WANT TO EXPLAIN ONCE MORE? MAYBE A BIT SLOWER...
...BECAUSE I'M SURE I MISUNDERSTOOD YOU, PRINCE T'CHALLA.
I DON'T THINK YOU DID, BUT LET ME MAKE IT SIMPLER. SOME TIME LATER TODAY THE WORLD IS GOING TO END.
WE WILL BE ASSEMBLING A TEAM OF THE BEST SCIENTISTS IN THE WORLD IN THE HOPES OF SOMEHOW SURVIVING THAT END AND RESTARTING THE HUMAN RACE...
I'M TELLING YOU THIS BECAUSE PEOPLE NEED TO KNOW WHEN THEIR TIME IS UP. PEOPLE NEED TO KNOW WHEN THEIR TIME'S RUN OUT.
AND THEY NEED TO HEAR THIS FROM SOMEONE THEY CAN TRUST--
THERE HAS TO BE SOMETHING WE CAN DO. SOMEONE SOMEWHERE HAS TO BE ABLE TO DO SOMETHING.
ISN'T THERE ANYONE WILLING TO HELP?
THERE WAS.
HE WAS A KING. BUT THEN YOU AND ALL THE REST OF YOUR KIND THREW HIS PEOPLE TO A PACK OF WOLVES CALLED THE CABAL.
AND NOW HIS CITY IS ASH.

WHICH IS ALL I NOW OFFER YOU.
HOW LONG?
WE BELIEVE THE FINAL INCURSION WILL OCCUR IN THE NEXT SIX HOURS.
MISTER PRESIDENT, WE CAN SCRAMBLE ALL MILITARY PERSONNEL. WE CAN STOP WHATEVER OPERATION THESE PEOPLE ARE--
YOU'RE NOT LISTENING, GENERAL...
IT'S OVER.
YOU AND EVERYONE ELSE IN THIS ROOM ARE GOING TO DIE. THERE'S NO AVOIDING IT. THERE'S NO ESCAPE. THIS IS SIMPLY THE HAND YOU'VE BEEN DEALT.
I'M NOT POSTURING. I'M DELIVERING INFORMATION.
WHAT YOU DO WITH IT IS UP TO YOU.
YOU PEOPLE WERE SUPPOSED TO *SAVE* US!
DO YOU KNOW WHAT I'VE LEARNED THROUGH ALL THIS?
THERE WAS *NEVER* ANY SAVING YOU.
WE WERE NEVER GOING TO SAVE THE WORLD-- WE NEVER STOOD A CHANCE.

EARTH-1610.
THEN.
Maker, the Helicarriers of S.H.I.E.L.D. have returned and joined us en route.
Can we expect any further trouble, General?
No. I've cleared the airspace, but just as a future consideration...
...it's not unnatural for a nation state to lose their cool when UFOs show up unannounced in sovereign airspace.
Ah. Proventialism...
A concept soon to be forgotten, if I had to guess.
City, how long do we have now?
No time at all, Maker.
You're going to want to pay attention, General Fury.

This is an incursion.
A collision of worlds that is the harbinger of the death of universes.
Am I crazy or is that *another Earth?*
What. The. Hell?
Launching WorldWorm, Maker...
Scans show no signs of incoming hostiles. It appears to be a soft Earth, sir.
What you're looking at, General, is a delivery mechanism for embedding a microscopic singularity into the core of the other world.
It's a slower method, but much cleaner than my earlier antimatter solutions. Honestly, I'm not sure what I was thinking using those.
Anyway, you'll notice that once the world dies, the incursion stops.

Are you, in some kind of roundabout way, telling me you just destroyed a planet?
I'm not being coy at all, General. That's **exactly** what I did.
That's what I've been trying to explain to you. There are forces at play that are actively trying to destroy our entire universe.
An incursion means that we **must** choose between the survival of our world or theirs.
There are no other choices, I've considered them from time to time... but that doesn't matter now. Tell him, Thanos.
WHAT WAS ONCE AN INFINITE NUMBER OF REALITIES HAS--AFTER TODAY--NOW BEEN REDUCED DOWN TO TWO FINAL UNIVERSES.
THIS ONE... AND THE ONE FROM WHICH WE CAME.
AND DO YOU KNOW WHAT HORRORS AWAIT US ON THAT WORLD?
THE GREATEST HEROES YOU HAVE EVER SEEN. THE VALIANT. THE COURAGEOUS.
IF YOU WANT YOUR WORLD TO LIVE...
WE MUST FIND A WAY TO ***KILL THEM ALL.***

EARTH-1610. NOW.
HOW GOES IT, MAXIMUS?
WILL IT BE READY IN TIME?
THE INFORMATION IS ALL HERE, THANOS, BUT WILL IT WORK?
MAYBE. MAYBE NOT. I THINK I'LL LET YOU STEW FOR A BIT.
CHK
GAMES ARE BORING, MAXIMUS. ESPECIALLY WHEN YOU'RE SO BAD AT THEM.
IF THERE'S ONE CONSTANT IN THE UNIVERSE, IT'S THAT YOU'RE GOING TO DO WHATEVER'S NECESSARY TO SAVE YOUR OWN SKIN.
WHAT ABOUT THE GENERAL? IS HE GOING TO PLAY HIS PART?
HE WAS ONLY GIVEN THE OPPORTUNITY TO HAVE A SINGLE ROLE, NAMOR...HE'LL BEHAVE PREDICTABLY. HE HAS TO.
I'M NOT SO SURE. HE SEEMS CRAFTY. AND HE'S LOOKED BOTH OF US IN THE EYES...HE KNOWS WE'RE LYING.
AND HOW DO YOU KNOW THAT?
LOOK IN THE MIRROR, THANOS. YOU'RE AN EXTREMELY SKETCHY-LOOKING PERSON...
STILL, WHEN THE SKY OPENS UP AND HE SEES OUR EARTH SITTING THERE...
FOR THEM... IT'S THE FRYING PAN OR THE FIRE. AND WE GET TO WATCH IT ALL BURN.

THE TRISKELION.
Thank you for being here.
An hour ago I gave you all the chance to go home, as this is a volunteer-only mission.
In a very short time, the sky is gonna open up and we're gonna have to face an entire world full of enemies.
There is no good news. The bad is that it's another Earth.
There's nothing we can do about the witnesses inside the theatre of battle, but S.H.I.E.L.D. has made a conscious choice-- *I* have made a conscious choice-- to not tell the people of our world.
Let them live out their final hours in peace and not panic.
We owe them that.
The City's here, Nick.
Most of us won't live through the day, but if we don't make that sacrifice, then no one on our world will.
For me, it's not really a choice at all.

"I'll die on my feet, thank you very much.
"On my feet with a gun in my hand.
"I know you feel the same.
"So here we go..."

EARTH-616.
THE BAXTER BUILDING. NOW.
SO THE PLAN...IF YOU CAN ACTUALLY CALL MITIGATING DEFEAT A PLAN...
...IS TO SAVE WHAT WE CAN.
WE HAVE A VESSEL THEORETICALLY CAPABLE OF SURVIVING THE COLLAPSE.
WE'RE FINALIZING THE MANIFEST NOW, BUT I THINK WE'RE GOING TO GET ALL THE RIGHT SCIENTISTS AND ENGINEERS WE NEED TO RESTART HUMANITY.
I WISH THERE WAS MORE, BUT...
AT LEAST IT'S SOMETHING...
BUT I WANT TO BE CLEAR ABOUT ONE THING: THIS ISN'T AN ESCAPE PLAN FOR YOU PEOPLE.
I UNDERSTAND HOW YOU FEEL, STEVE. BUT THERE'S NO GETTING AROUND THE FACT THAT SOME OF THE ILLUMINATI ARE GOING...
BANNER KNOWS HE'S A RISK, SO HE'S TAKEN HIMSELF OUT. BRADDOCK'S BOWED OUT AS WELL, AND PYM'S UNSTABLE...
BUT THE REST HAVE VALUE.
THAT MAKES SENSE, SUE. THE SMARTS ARE ONE THING...
BUT THERE SHOULD BE SOME PROTECTION ON BOARD AS WELL. THE ILLUMINATI FIT THAT BILL, BUT YOU KNOW THE PROBLEM HERE, RIGHT?

TONY.
YOU DON'T HAVE TO CONCERN YOURSELF WITH THAT...
MISTER STARK HAS DONE MORE THAN--
THERE'S NO ONE--ABSOLUTELY NO ONE--WHO CAN DO THE THINGS HE DOES. IF WE'RE TALKING ABOUT BUILDING, WELL, THEN WE SHOULD BE TAKING OUR BEST BUILDER.
WE SHOULD CONSIDER IT.
NO ONE HERE LOVES THE GUY LIKE I DO, REED, BUT I THINK THE QUESTION YOU HAVE TO ASK IS: IS HE REALLY THE GUY WE ONCE KNEW...
...OR THE PERSON WE KNOW NOW? I DON'T THINK YOU CAN GAMBLE WITH PUTTING THE SECOND ONE ON THE BOAT.
I'M SORRY, DEAR.
BUT I HAVE TO AGREE WITH RHODEY--IT'S A BAD IDEA.
IT'S NOT JUST A BAD IDEA--IT'S *NOT GOING TO HAPPEN* EVEN IF IT WAS A GOOD ONE.
PICK ANOTHER BATTLE, REED.
DO WE UNDERSTAND ONE ANOTHER?
YES.
THEN THAT'S IT. YOU HAVE YOUR ONE THING TO DO, AND I HAVE MINE.
YOU SURE THIS IS HOW SOMEONE SHOULD SPEND THEIR LAST FEW HOURS ALIVE, STEVE?
LET ME WORRY ABOUT THAT, RHODEY. NOW TELL ME...
...CAN YOU FIND HIM?

THE RESURRECTION BUILDING.
STARK UNDERGROUND.
PROXIMITY ALERT, MISTER STARK.
MULTIPLE WAR MACHINE DRONES DETECTED.
AND BAD NEWS, SIR. THEY'RE HARD-SHIELDED AGAINST PRIMARY OVERRIDES AND THEY HAVE FRIENDLY ACCESS CODES.
AND WHAT ABOUT THE OTHER THING?
FINAL INCURSION WILL BEGIN IN FOUR MINUTES, SIR.
SUPER.
A SINGLE WAR MACHINE HAS ENTERED THE BUILDING, MISTER STARK. HEADED THIS WAY.
SO...
...YOU TOO, RHODEY?
IT ISN'T LIKE WE GO WAY BACK OR ANYTHING. IT ISN'T LIKE YOU DON'T OWE ME.
I'M NOT RHODEY...
BUT I *DO* OWE YOU...

TIME TO SETTLE UP, TONY.
EVERYONE'S TELLING ME IT'S THE END OF THE WORLD...
WELL... THERE'S ONE LAST THING I'M GONNA DO BEFORE THAT HAPPENS.
YOU? IN ARMOR I DESIGNED?
IT'S NEVER GONNA HAPPEN, STEVE...
YOU NEED TO WAKE UP.

NHHMMM?
WHAT'D YOU SAY?
WAKE UP, OLD MAN.
I HAVEN'T BEEN ABLE TO SLEEP.
I COULDN'T STOP THINKING ABOUT SOMETHING YOU SAID, AND, WELL...*I'VE BEEN BUSY.*
I'M SORRY. I KNOW IT'S LATE.
IT'S FINE, TONY.
I'M GRATEFUL.
BAD DREAMS?
SOMETHING LIKE THAT.

AFTER ALL THIS TIME, HAVEN'T YOU FIGURED IT OUT YET?
THE MACHINE IS JUST A TOOL. IT'S THE QUALITY OF THE MAN INSIDE THAT MATTERS.
DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA HOW TIRED I AM OF YOU REMINDING ME HOW MUCH BETTER THAN ALL OF US YOU ARE?
YOU THINK I DON'T KNOW WHO I *AM*?
SO...THIS IDEA HAS BEEN RUNNING THROUGH MY MIND. IT'S OVERWHELMING --*ALL CONSUMING*-- AND I CAN'T SHUT IT OFF.
THE EXACT SAME THING HAPPENED THE DAY WE FOUND YOU.
YOU REMEMBER THAT?

YOU THINK I DON'T KNOW WHO YOU ARE?
OH...I REMEMBER EVERYTHING ABOUT THAT DAY.
WE STARTED SOMETHING THAT MATTERED. BECAUSE OF YOU, THE WORLD CHANGED...
I CHANGED.
EVERYTHING'S CHANGED!
OOOOOFF!
AND YOU MAY KNOW--BUT I DON'T!
I DON'T KNOW YOU ANYMORE AT ALL...AND I DON'T WANT TO...
YOU AND I...WE ARE FINISHED!

THAT'S THE BEST IDEA I'VE HEARD ALL DAY.
AARGHHHHH!
SEE, THE *BEST* IDEAS ARE ALWAYS THE *SIMPLEST.* AND LAST WEEK WHEN WE WERE TALKING ABOUT HOW THINGS KEEP *ESCALATING...*
HOW THE WORLD IS EVER MORE DANGEROUS, HOW THREATS ARE MORE FREQUENT...HOW OUR ENEMIES ARE SEEMINGLY ENDLESS...
WELL, STEVE, THAT'S A COMPLEX PROBLEM, BUT YOU HAD A PRETTY SIMPLE ANSWER...
DO YOU REMEMBER WHAT YOU SAID?
I DO.
"WE HAVE TO GET *BIGGER.*"
THE WHOLE IDEA... THE *AVENGERS MACHINE*...YOU HAD US ALL RUNNING IN A CIRCLE, DIDN'T YOU?
YOU *KNEW...*

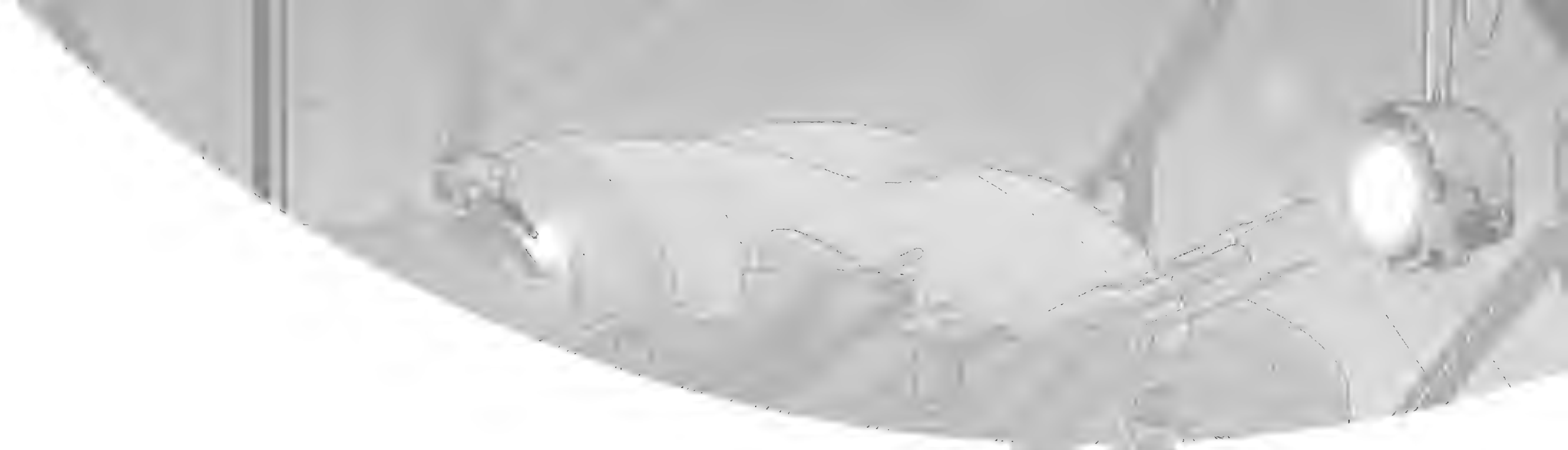
YOU KNEW IT WAS A LIE.
YOU KNEW THERE WAS NO STOPPING THIS.
I KNEW THERE WAS A GOOD CHANCE WE COULDN'T. IT WAS JUST TOO BIG. BUT WE DID NEED THE TIME TO TRY.
YOU WOULD THINK ONE OF THE OTHERS WOULD HAVE SEEN IT, BUT THEY WERE EITHER DISTRACTED WITH OTHER THINGS, OR IN REED'S CASE, WELL...
THE MAN RUNS ON HOPE. HE LIVES EVERY DAY IN DENIAL.
I WANT TO HEAR YOU SAY IT.
I WANT TO HEAR YOU SAY YOU *LIED.*

DO YOU EVEN REMEMBER HOW ALL THIS STARTED?
I WANT TO HEAR IT, TONY!
ARE YOU LISTENING TO ME, OLD FRIEND?
AARRGH!!!!

ARE YOU LISTENING?
I WANT TO HEAR YOU SAY IT!
WAIT... WAIT...
YOU... YOU'RE RIGHT.
I... I LIED...
I... KNEW...
YOU KNEW THE WHOLE TIME!
YOU KNEW AND YOU TOLD NO ONE!
I KNOW. I KNOW.
DO...DO YOU KNOW WHAT...
...I WOULD HAVE DONE...DONE DIFFERENTLY NOW, STEVE...?

NOTHING!
IT STARTED WITH TWO MEN.
ONE WAS LIFE...
...AND ONE WAS DEATH.
AND ONE... ALWAYS WINS.

EVERYTHING DIES.



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SECRET WARS

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THE BAXTER BUILDING.
VALERIA RICHARDS
DAUGHTER OF MISTER FANTASTIC
OKAY.
LISTEN UP.
YOU KNOW ME. I DON'T LIKE TO BE DRAMATIC...
BUT WE HAVE TO TALK ABOUT THIS...
AND I *COULD* USE TERMS LIKE "*COUNTDOWN*" AND "*TIMETABLE*," BUT I DON'T WANT TO DO THAT, BECAUSE...
ONE: I DON'T LIKE TO CAUSE A PANIC. WE ALL KNOW STUDIES HAVE SHOWN THAT PEOPLE RESPOND UNPREDICTABLY IN HIGH PRESSURE SITUATIONS, AND WE NEED AS FEW VARIABLES AS POSSIBLE RIGHT NOW.
AND TWO: YOU'RE A BUNCHA GIANT FREAKING BABIES.
BUT SINCE WE'RE ALSO *FRIENDS*--AND KEEPING THE AFOREMENTIONED TIMETABLE IN MIND...I THINK YOU NEED TO KNOW THAT FROM THIS POINT FORWARD, I'M SUBSCRIBING TO THE THEORY OF *TOUGH LOVE.*
LIKE, I'VE TRANSFERRED THE MONEY AND THE PACKAGE IS IN THE MAIL.
SO LISTEN UP, DUMMIES...
SEE THIS CLOCK?
IT SAYS THAT IN FOUR DAYS *THE WORLD IS ENDING.*
95:42:03
AND THE CLOCK DON'T LIE.]

THE GOOD NEWS, FUTURE FOUNDATION, IS WE'RE ALMOST DONE WITH OUR BUILD...AND WE *CAN* FINISH WHAT WE'RE WORKING ON.
DAD, BLACK PANTHER AND THEIR OTHER SORT-OF-SMART FRIENDS WILL HELP OUT, BUT WE SHOULD PLAN ON THAT NOT HAPPENING... AS THINGS ARE GOING TO GET PRETTY CRAZY OUT THERE IN THE NEXT COUPLE OF DAYS.
95:40:09
OKAY. THAT'S IT FOR THE PEP TALK, WORKER BEES. ANY QUESTIONS?
AHEM.
YOU DON'T HAVE TO RAISE YOUR HAND, MAN.
IN TIMES OF STRESS, AN ORDERLY MIND IS A FORTRESS, BENTLEY.
GO AHEAD, DRAGON.
WHAT'S ON YOUR MIND?
AT FIRST, NONE OF US NOTICED, BECAUSE WE WERE ALL FOCUSED ON SEPARATE SYSTEMS.
FOR EXAMPLE: I WAS WORKING ON LONG-TERM STASIS, WHILE *ONOME* WAS FABRICATING THE VIBRANIUM-TRIBUNAL HULL PLATING...

BUT NOW THAT WE'VE STARTED PIECING EVERYTHING TOGETHER, IT'S STILL A LITTLE AMBIGUOUS ON WHAT EXACTLY IT IS THAT WE'RE BUILDING.
YEAH...
IT'S A SHIP.

UH, VAL?
ONE MORE QUESTION.
SERIOUSLY, WHAT'S WITH THE HAND RAISING?
THERE'S, LIKE, *TEN* PEOPLE IN THE ROOM, ALEX. SPIT IT OUT.
OKAY. SO. HERE'S THE THING THAT'S TRIPPING ME UP, VAL.
IT'S NOT JUST A SHIP. IT CERTAINLY ISN'T ANY KIND OF SALVATION MACHINE OR ANYTHING REMOTELY HOPEFUL LIKE THAT.
I KNOW WE'RE NOT AS SMART AS YOU, BUT WE THINK WE'VE FIGURED OUT WHAT WE'RE BUILDING. STASIS PODS. MULTIPLE LAYERS OF MULTIVERSAL SHIELDING...
IT'S A *LIFE RAFT,* ISN'T IT?
YEP.
SO. THE WORLD'S GOING TO END, AND WE'RE GOING TO RUN? *THAT'S* THE BRILLIANT PLAN?
AND ALSO, I CAN COUNT--THERE'S ONLY SEATING IN THAT THING FOR MAYBE SIXTY.
THE EARTH'S GONNA DIE...AND OUR BIG MOVE IS TO SAVE A FEW DOZEN PEOPLE?
ONLY THE STRONG SURVIVE, DOG.
I'M TAKING THE BENTLEY SHOW ON THE ROAD.
IT'S NOT LIKE THAT, ALEX...
YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND.
THEY *TRIED.*
FRANKLIN RICHARDS
SON OF MISTER FANTASTIC

"IT STARTED IN SECRET, WITH THE ILLUMINATI.
"WHEN THEY DISCOVERED THAT UNIVERSES WERE COLLIDING, THE SMARTEST AND VERY BEST OF US ATTEMPTED TO SAVE EVERYONE.
"THEY TRIED EVERYTHING TO PREVENT THE INCURSIONS. THE IMPROBABLE...
"THE IMPOSSIBLE...
"AND THEN, EVENTUALLY, THE UNTHINKABLE-- *DESTROYING WORLDS!*

"IT WAS TOO MUCH. AND THESE GREAT MEN WHO HAD DONE SUCH GREAT THINGS...
"THEY ALL BROKE.
"THEY SPLINTERED.
"AND IN THEIR ABSENCE, SOMETHING WORSE TOOK THEIR PLACE--*THE CABAL.*
"EVERYTHING TURNED UPSIDE DOWN AND INSIDE OUT...
"INCLUDING THESE PEOPLE WHO HAD ONCE BEEN COLLEAGUES AND FRIENDS."

THEY TRIED AS HARD AS THEY COULD. JUST LIKE ANYBODY WOULD.
IT JUST WASN'T ENOUGH.
THAT'S RIGHT. WE COULDN'T WIN. SO WE CAME UP WITH THE ONLY SOLUTION LEFT:
NOT LOSING.
WHICH IS WHAT THE RAFT IS FOR.
SO GET BACK TO WORK!
OR ELSE THE SPECIALLY CULTIVATED COLLECTION OF SCIENTISTS, ENGINEERS AND BUILDERS HANDPICKED TO RESTART THE HUMAN RACE WON'T HAVE A LIFE RAFT TO ESCAPE ON!
AFTER ALL...
IT'S THE ONLY HOPE WE HAVE LEFT.

FOUR DAYS LATER.
INCURSION EVENT COMMENCES.
OH, MAN...
WE FINISHED, AND IT APPEARS IT WAS JUST IN TIME.
YEAH, BUT WE MAY HAVE BIGGER PROBLEMS THAN JUST THE END OF THE WORLD.
"WE PREDICTED THAT TWO EARTHS FROM DIFFERENT UNIVERSES WERE GOING TO COLLIDE...
"WHICH WAS BAD ENOUGH..."
BUT THEY CAME TO THE SAME CONCLUSION!

"I THINK WE'RE GOING TO HAVE TO *FIGHT* OUR WAY OUT OF THIS."

"WE KNOW SO MUCH MORE THAN WE UNDERSTAND...
"BUT WE KNOW SO LITTLE.
"MANY BELIEVE THE WHITE LIGHT YOU SEE WHEN YOU DIE IS THE SUPERCHARGED ELECTRIC WHIMPER OF A DESPERATE AND DYING BRAIN.
"SYNAPTIC DEATH.
"BUT IT'S NOT.

"THAT BRILLIANT, BLINDING LIGHT IS *GOD*...

"AND HE HAS BEEN WITH US ALL ALONG."
WE ARE BEYOND.
DREAMERS. DESTROYERS. ALL OF REALITY OUR WHIM.
WHO DARES STAND BEFORE US?
I.
DOOM.

THE MULTIVERSE IS DYING.
ONLY TWO UNIVERSES REMAIN.
TODAY, EARTHS COLLIDE.

MANHATTAN.
EARTH-1610.
INCURSION EVENT IMMINENT.
THE TRISKELION.
HEADQUARTERS OF THIS EARTH'S S.H.I.E.L.D.
You tell me the world is ending, I wonder if you think I'm *blind.* You tell me it's ending today...
Well, then, Richards... I wanna know *how long we got left?*

THE CITY. HOME OF THE CABAL AND THE CHILDREN OF TOMORROW. CURRENTLY RESIDING IN MANHATTAN.
Everything dies, General Fury. In fact, much of what could be defined as existence *already has.* Now all that remains is our universe...*and theirs.*
What follows--this...*Incursion* between our Earth and their Earth will begin very soon. *In minutes, perhaps.* How long will it last? That, General, depends on no small number of variables...
And how good you are at eliminating them.
*So this is it? We destroy their world and our universe lives? You're sure this is the **last one?***
This City has many machines. One of which scours all of space and time. Observing... recording...
Witnessing the collapse of our once infinite multiverse.
Am I sure this is all there is left? More than I am of any other thing.
So go, General Fury...
*Save our world one last time. **Save us all.***
BE-DOOP!
Can we trust him?
Reed Richards is a thousand-year-old megalomaniacal boy genius who wiped out most of Europe on a whim, Hawkeye.
No. We most certainly cannot.
Then why the hell are we doing this, Nick?
Because it's also worth pointing out that he's not wrong, and my job--our job--is protecting the world.
So if this comes down to them trying to kill us or us killing them... well, Clint...
That ain't no choice at all.

"Send everything...
"Everything we got."
The Triskelion has launched all their ships, Maker.
Good.
They'll attack preemptively, the other Earth will respond, and while they play we will be hard at work on the *things that actually matter.*
What's our current estimated time of completion, City?
Undetermined. When they first started, the incursions between worlds lasted eight hours, but compression of space-time now puts my best calculation at under an hour.
I HAVE TO WONDER...*WHY LIE* TO THEM?
Hmmm?
WE'VE RUN EVERY SIMULATION THERE IS. WE'VE REACHED THE DEATH OF EVERYTHING. THERE IS NO SAVING ANYTHING. NO VICTORY TO BE HAD. NO VICTORY OF ANY KIND. SO WHY LIE TO THEM?
We show them one hand, and hide our real objective in the other.
I lied because we need just a little more time...I dress the lie up in a story of hope because if they have that, then they'll believe they have a chance...
They'll fight a little harder... and won't that be fun for you and your Cabal to watch?
YOU HUMANS AND YOUR UNSEEMLY THEATRICS. THERE IS NO HONOR IN RUNNING FROM DEATH...
PEOPLE SHOULD KNOW WHEN THEIR TIME IS UP.

01

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THE END TIMES

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MANHATTAN.
EARTH-616.
THE INCURSION POINT BETWEEN BOTH WORLDS.
"WE TOLD THE TRUTH.
"WE INFORMED THE VARIOUS WORLD LEADERS WHAT WE HAD LEARNED THAT MORNING, AND THEN WE WATCHED AS THEY TOLD THEIR NATIONS.
"IT WAS THE CHANCELLOR IN GERMANY, THE PRIME MINISTERS IN BRITAIN AND JAPAN, IT WAS THE ROYAL FAMILY IN RIYADH...AND HERE, IT WAS THE PRESIDENT.
"THE LANGUAGE THEY USED--THEIR MESSAGE--WAS ALMOST ALL THE SAME.
"'REMAIN CALM. THE WORLD IS IN GRAVE DANGER, BUT WE-- *THOSE IN POWER--* ARE DOING EVERYTHING WE CAN TO FIND SOME SOLUTION TO THIS TERRIBLE PROBLEM.'
"BUT NO ONE BELIEVED THEM...
"HOW COULD THEY?

"THEY WERE JUST MEN AND WOMEN, AND PEOPLE NEED TO BELIEVE IN *SOMETHING MORE.*"
OOOOKAY, EVERYONE GET OFF THE STREETS. GET SOMEPLACE SAFE...
I'VE GOT THIS...
"UH, MAYBE."
THE BAXTER BUILDING.
LOOKS LIKE THE SITUATION'S GONE FROM BAD TA WORSE...
BOOM
BOOM
NONOFUKU
ESE
CAFFE
...ARE WE READY TA GO, TORCH?
THE SUPPLIES ARE PREPPED AND WE'RE ALMOST DONE PACKING, BEN.
BUT LOOKING OVER THE LAB SPECS, ARE WE SURE WE NEED ALL THIS FOOD?
WHEN WE REALIZED MANKIND WAS DOOMED, WE BUILT THIS LIFE RAFT IN THE HOPE OF RESTARTING THE HUMAN RACE. HYDROPONICS IS AN EXCELLENT MEDIUM-RANGE SOLUTION, JOHNNY...
BUT IT'S NOT GOING TO MATTER IF OUR ENTIRE SPECIALLY CHOSEN SCIENCE TEAM STARVES TO DEATH IN THE FIRST MONTH.
SPEAKING OF...
WHAT'S THE E.T.A. ON OUR *REAL* CARGO, SUSAN?
THEY'RE DUE ANY MINUTE, T'CHALLA... BUT THAT WAS BEFORE THE RAIN STARTED...
I'LL CHECK IN.

RRAM
COURIER ONE, THIS IS THE BAXTER BUILDING CALLING FOR A STATUS UPDATE.
BLACK WIDOW? SPIDER-WOMAN? ARE YOU READING ME?
WE HEAR YOU, SUSAN. TRANSPORT'S STILL FIVE MINUTES OUT...
WE'RE HAVING TO TAKE A LONGER, LESS-EXPLOSIVE ROUTE.
HOW DID THE EXFILTRATION GO?
WE JUST SPENT AN HOUR LITERALLY PULLING FAMILIES APART. SO IT WENT EXACTLY AS EXPECTED, AND NO ONE IS TAKING IT WELL.
TWO OF THE SCIENTISTS EVEN CHANGED THEIR MINDS AND DECIDED TO STAY. HERE, I'M SENDING YOU THE FINAL PASSENGER LIST NOW.
NATASHA SAYS FIVE MINUTES. AND WE LOST DOCTORS MAY AND ZHANG. THEY STAYED BEHIND.
SPECIALISTS IN CHEMISTRY AND PHYSICS. THANK GOD THEY WERE REDUNDANCIES, SO WE SHOULD BE OKAY...
LET'S START THE LAUNCH COUNTDOWN. T'CHALLA, CAN YOU--
YES.
TWO SCENARIOS, MANIFOLD, YOU GET THAT. ONE, EVERYTHING GOES AS PLANNED. WE LAUNCH WITH OUR RESURRECTION TEAM, YOU TELEPORT ON BOARD, AND WE'RE OFF.
TWO... EVERYTHING GOES WRONG...

AND THEN I SAVE THE DAY.
I UNDERSTAND... AND I'M READY... TURN THIS THING ON.
"WE DON'T HAVE MUCH TIME LEFT."
Fury, this is Stark...
We've engaged the other Earth and are meeting **heavy opposition**. No large-scale response to our fleet, but we're pretty outnumbered on the metahuman front.
You want to impart some of that tactical acumen you're famous for?
There are no second chances or prolonged windows of opportunity here, Mister Stark. Overwhelming force is what's called for.
Just win, baby.
BOOOMM
Understood.
Initializing Iron Man Six...
LOOK OUT!
OH, GOD--
RUN!
IT'S OKAY-- YOU CAN BREATHE.
I GOT YOU.

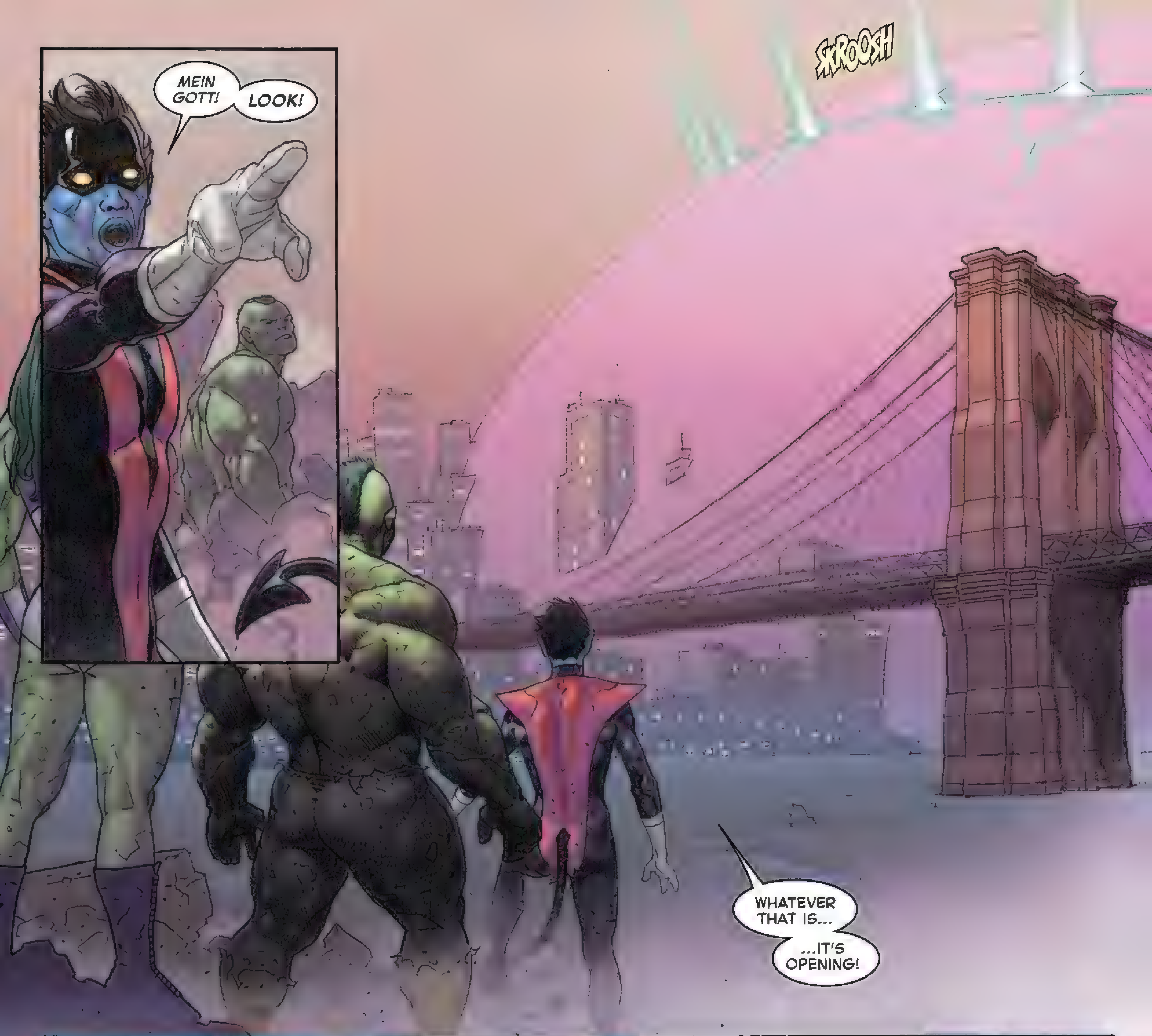
DANNY?
ALMOST DONE, LUKE. LAST ONE...
COME ON. THAT'S IT.
OKAY, GUARDIANS...
SEE THAT BIG ROBOT THING IN THE SKY? THAT'S THE ONE YOU AND DRAX WANT TO FOCUS ON, ROCKET.
WHAT? WHERE? OH, YOU MEAN THE MASSIVE, TACKY RED-AND-GOLD THING THAT BASICALLY SAYS, *"HELLO. I WAS BUILT BY A GIANT TOOL, PLEASE, OH GOD PLEASE, SHOOT ME OUT OF THE SKY"?*
NO. PROBLEM.
OUR ENEMY FADES AND THE WIND IS SHIFTING IN OUR FAVOR, THOR. NOW! WITH ME...
AYE, STORM. IF THIS IS THE END, LET US CALL FORTH THE POWER OF THE HEAVENS THEMSELVES...
...AND STRIKE!
KRAKATHOO
OOOOM
ICEMAN, LOOK!
SENTINELS! ARE THEY FRIEND OR FOE?
COMPLICATED QUESTION, CAP. THEY'RE FROM NATION X...

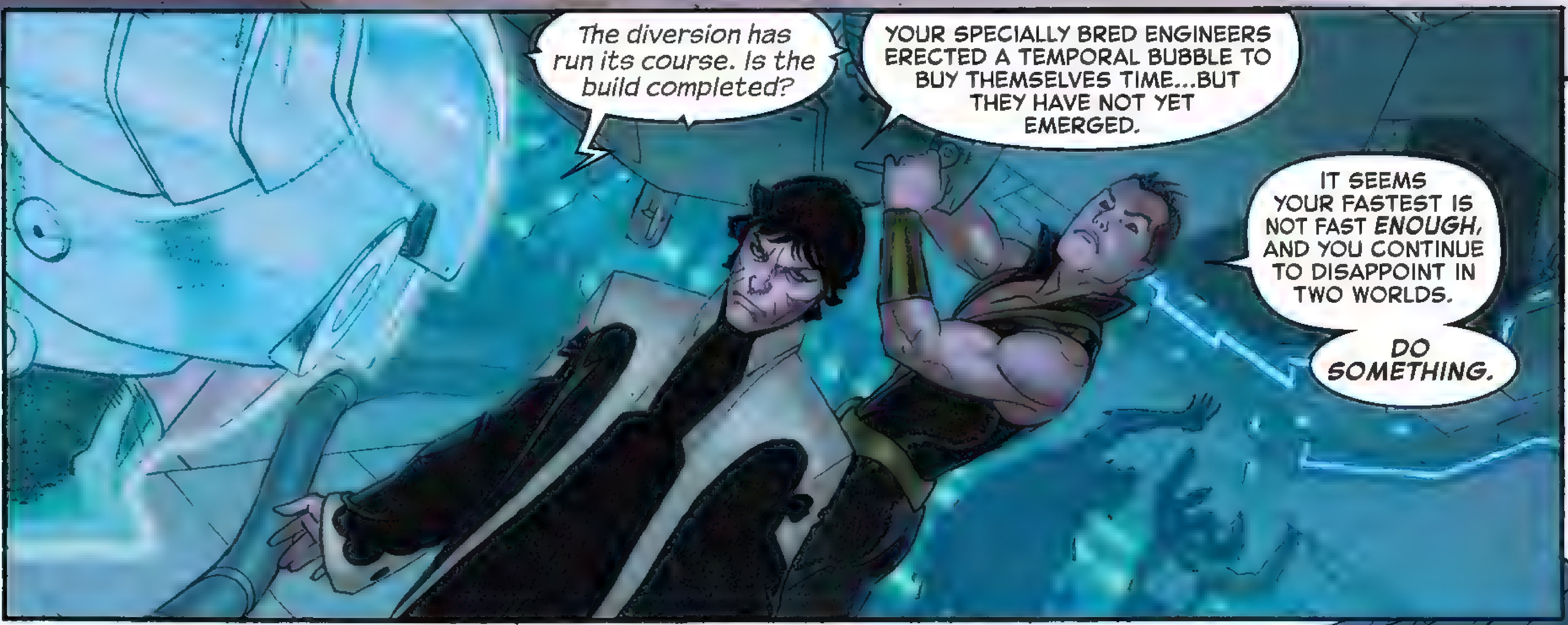
"...THERE'S NO TELLING WHAT CYCLOPS HAS PLANNED."
LANDFALL, PROFESSOR SUMMERS. PACKAGE INTACT.
YOUR ORDERS?
KEEP EVERYONE AWAY FOR AS LONG AS YOU CAN.
I NEED JUST A LITTLE MORE TIME.
"Fury! We're taking heavy losses.
"Helicarriers are going offline..."
BAM
And I've just lost my mobile weapons platform.
Hold as long as you can, Stark.
I don't think that--ugh!
NICE SHOOTING, DRAX!
THERE GOES A BILLION DOLLARS WORTH OF RED-AND-GOLD CRAP.
I AM GROOT.
I DO REMEMBER WHEN COMIC BOOKS WERE ONLY A DOLLAR. A DOLLAR'S WORTH OF CRAP!
SEE THAT, HERO?
TIME TO CALL FOR BACKUP...

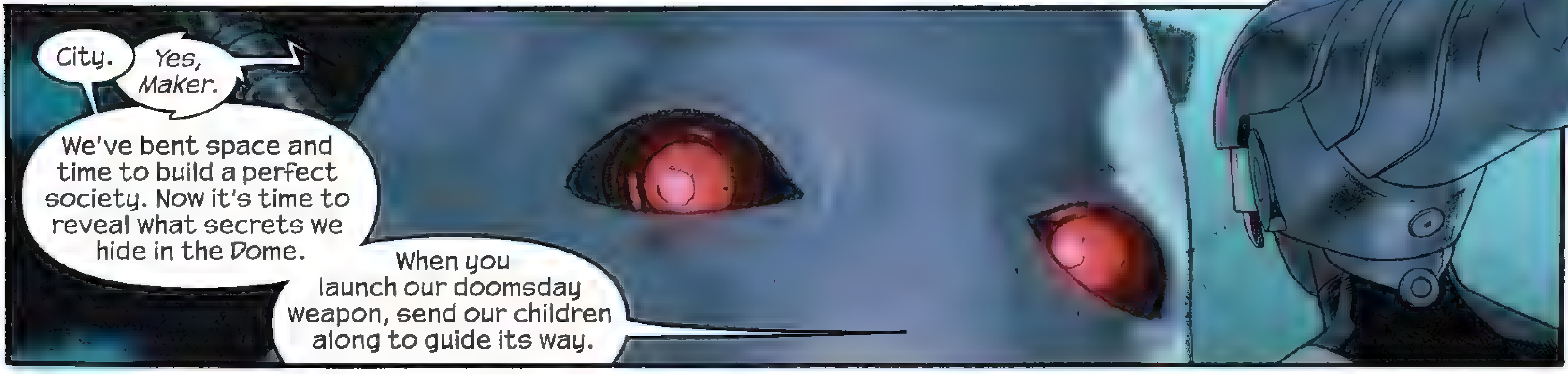
"...OR MAYBE YOU'RE JUST DONE FOR THE DAY."
MAGNIFY SECTION 187.09 BY 902.87. SEE IT?
UH-HUH. THAT'S WHERE THESE SHIPS'RE LAUNCHING FROM, POD. BUT IT'LL BE LIKE HITTING A PENNY WITH A MARBLE FROM A MILE AWAY...
YOU SURE YOU CAN DO THAT, COLOSSUS?
TRUST ME, COMRADE SHE-HULK...
WITH THIS, I HAVE HAD LOTS AND LOTS OF PRACTICE.
Nick! Are you getting this? Are you reading me?
I've lost the Six and we're down eighty percent of our carriers...
We need help, General. Now!
I hear you, Stark--I'm going to ca--
BAOOOOOMMMM
BA
What the hell was that?

BOOM
BOOM
POF
YES. IT'S STILL STANDING...
I SAY, *"LET'S GO FOR A RIDE"*...AND WHOA, BABY--IT'S A ROLLER COASTER.
I CAN'T BELIEVE THAT THING IS STILL STANDING.
"FOR NOW."
We've lost communication with the Incursion force.
Patch me through to the City, Hawkeye. Any time you can shave off of your very best would be greatly appr--
Got 'em.
General. How goes the war?
Oh, best war ever...
We've failed to secure the Incursion site on the other Earth. So you're just gonna to have to launch your doomsday worldkiller weapon and hope for the best.
As much as I hate to admit it...

"We've *failed.*"
Darkest moments of a dark life, and I swear, I never once thought I'd go out like this.
Make sure you finish the job, *Maker!*
"Finish" implies that your task was uncompleted, General.
"It implies a failure of action or understanding of purpose. Let me assure you...
"This was *always* how it was going to end.
"You bought us no little bit of time...
"And that was remarkable for one whose time had long passed.
"Let me show you what I'll build on your ruins."


SKROOSH
MEIN GOTT!
LOOK!
WHATEVER THAT IS...
...IT'S OPENING!


The diversion has run its course. Is the build completed?
YOUR SPECIALLY BRED ENGINEERS ERECTED A TEMPORAL BUBBLE TO BUY THEMSELVES TIME...BUT THEY HAVE NOT YET EMERGED.
IT SEEMS YOUR FASTEST IS NOT FAST *ENOUGH*, AND YOU CONTINUE TO DISAPPOINT IN TWO WORLDS.
DO SOMETHING.


City.
Yes, Maker.
We've bent space and time to build a perfect society. Now it's time to reveal what secrets we hide in the Dome.
When you launch our doomsday weapon, send our children along to guide its way.

"Show these primitive people the future they could have had."
Huh.
What the...

PREPARE YOURSELVES!
THE OTHER EARTH HAS LAUNCHED A SECOND ATTACK!
WHO ARE *THESE* GUYS? WHAT ARE THEY?
THEY GOT BLACK BOLT!
I DON'T KNOW...

"BUT I THINK WE'RE ABOUT TO *FIND OU--*"
To: lizard@coldblooded.com, hitthetarget@hit.com, who@whocares.com, oz@amazinghair.net and 18 more.
From: wfisk@fiskindustries.com
Re: END OF WORLD.
Like all of you, I dreamed of a glorious end. Me, standing over the vanquished as the world looked up in envy. But it seems time, that fickle mistress, has robbed us all of such an opportunity.
So I say this: If the world is truly ending, let it end thusly...
With drink, and joy, at the sight of our enemies' greatest failure.
Please join me for a most raucous celebration at that place where we met that time for the thing. I'm buying.
Sincerely,
Wilson Fisk
AHEM.
GENTLEMEN. THEY SAY THAT WHEN YOU DIE, YOU CAN'T TAKE IT WITH YOU.
WHICH BEGS THE QUESTION:
EXACTLY WHAT AM I GONNA DO WITH *ALL THESE BULLETS?*
CLAC

BAXTER BUILDING, THIS IS COURIER ONE... I REPEAT, WE'RE UNDER FIRE.
SUSAN...I'M SORRY...
WE'RE NOT GOING TO MAKE IT.
YOU'RE ON YOUR OWN NO--
AHHHH!
OH NO...
NO. NO. NO. NO...
THEY'RE GONE, REED! WE'VE LOST THE RESURRECTION TEAM.
I'M SORRY, EDEN. IT'S OPTION TWO...
...YOUR POWERS THROUGH THIS MACHINE WILL HELP US FIND THE SURVIVORS THAT WE *NEED.*
T'CHALLA...
BRACE YOURSELF...THIS IS GOING TO *HURT.*
DO IT.

"ALERT, PROFESSOR..."
THERE IS AN EIGHTY-NINE PERCENT CHANCE THAT OUR DEFENSE PERIMETER WILL BE BREACHED BY HOSTILES IN THE NEXT MINUTE.
A MINUTE WILL BE MORE THAN ENOUGH... FOR THE PHOENIX EGG IS READY TO HATCH.
THERE YOU ARE, OLD FRIEND...
REMEMBER ME?
REMEMBER HOW THIS FEELS?

IT'S LOVE.
DRAX HATES THIS. DRAX HATES EARTH.
FWOOOO
YOU'RE TELLIN' ME, BIG GUY. CENTER OF THE UNIVERSE MY ASS... THIS PLACE IS A GIANT, STINKIN' PILE OF--
AARGGHH!
NO! ROCKET...
GROOT...
OH, MAN... HURRY! WE NEED TO...
WHAT...
THE..
QUILL? WHERE DID HE GO?!

THOR?!
STORM! SOMETHING HAPPEN--
HU
Hey, I know this is a long shot, but when all this is done maybe I could take you out?
Show you around town?
OH, SHUT...
THE
WE'RE OUT OF TIME. WE HAVE TO GO NOW!
CUT MANIFOLD LOOSE.
HE MADE ME PROMISE NOT TO, REED.
HE BELIEVES HE CAN STILL MAKE THIS WORK--HE BELIEVES HE CAN STILL FIND WHAT WE NEED.
ARE YOU SURE YOU WANT TO STAY, EDEN?
YES! GO.

"BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE."
LIFE RAFT AWAY!
Some people call it theft, Thanos, but if you take something and make it better... well, I've always believed a bit of appreciation and no small bit of gratitude are in order.
After all, it's not every day that you really learn something.
AND WHAT LESSON WOULD YOU SAY THE APOCALYPSE HAS TAUGHT *YOU*, MAKER?
That some things refuse to *die*.
LISTEN TO ME...YOU CAN'T KILL AN IDEA.

AARRGGHHHH!
"IT ALWAYS COMES BACK."
RESURRECTED.
"OR REBORN..."
...INTO A DIFFERENT FORM.

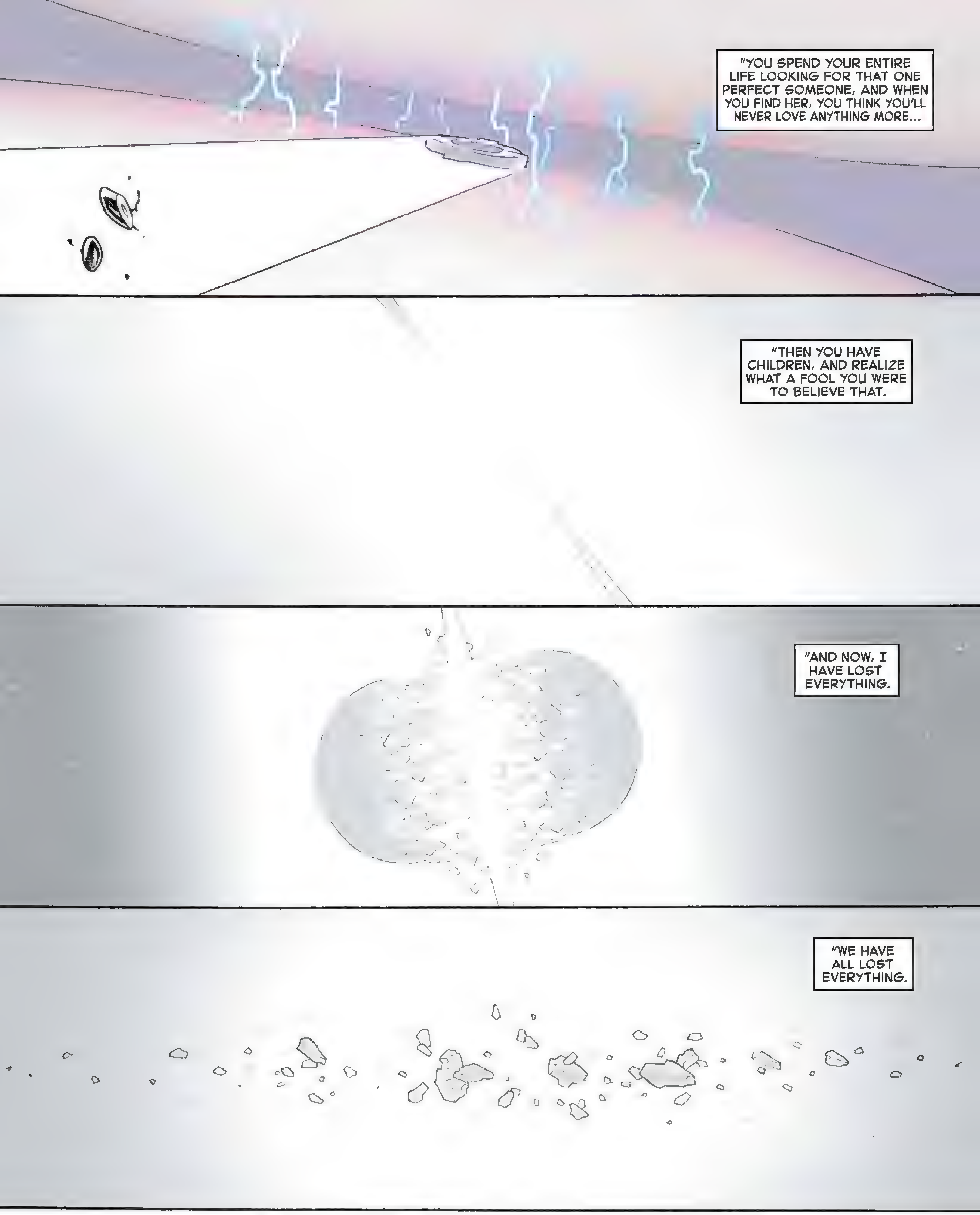
THE PLANET'S SURFACE IS FRACTURING. I THINK THIS IS EVERYONE WE'RE GOING TO GET, REED.
OKAY! EVERYONE, STRAP IN!
ARE WE GOING TO MAKE IT?
YES. *BARELY.*
RRRUMMMBLE
THAT DOESN'T SOUND GOOD.
I DUNNO WHAT'S GOING ON, BUT SHOULD THAT BE HAPPENING? SHOULD WE BE *SHAKING* LIKE THIS?
THE SHIELD IS HOLDING...THE CENTER POINT OF THE INCURSION GIVES US OUR BEST CHANCE TO--
WHERE ARE WE?
NINETY-TWO PERCENT. STILL IN THE RAFT'S SAFETY THRESHOLD.

KRAKKA-BOOOOOOOOOOM
WE'VE BEEN HIT!
HULL BREACH!

THE RAFT'S SHIELDS ARE STILL INTACT...BUT WE'VE LOST THE CARRIER SECTION...
OH, REED... SUSAN AND THE OTHERS...
YOUR CHILDREN...
NO. LOOK...
SEE? MY WIFE IS THE STRONGEST PERSON I KNOW...
"IT'LL TAKE EVERYTHING SHE HAS...BUT SUSAN WILL HOLD IT TOGETHER. SHE HAS TO."
T'CHALLA, YOU'LL NEED YOU TO DROP THIS SECTION OF THE SHIELD...THEN I CAN PULL THEM BACK IN.
THE FORCES AT PLAY OUT THERE, REED...
YOU'LL ONLY HAVE A FEW SECONDS BEFORE THE ENTIRE RAFT IS COMPROMISED...
CAN YOU DO--
YES!

OKAY...
IT'S GOING TO TAKE A FULL FIVE-SECOND CYCLE TO POWER DOWN THE SHIELD...I CAN INSTANTLY SLAM IT BACK INTO PLACE, BUT REED...
IF HULL INTEGRITY GOES BELOW NINETY PERCENT, I HAVE TO TURN IT BACK ON NO MATTER WHAT, UNDERSTAND? WE'LL LOSE *EVERYTHING* IF I DON'T.
I UNDERSTAND.
DO IT.
OKAY. IN FIVE...
"FOUR...
HOLD ON, SUSAN...
"THREE...
"TWO...
"ONE...
KKKRR
RRKKK
K

"GO!"
PULLING THEM BACK NOW...
WAIT...
BOOOM
NO!
NNOOOOOOOOOO!
THEY'RE GONE. THE SECTION JUST SPLINTERED INTO... OH, GOD...
GET THE SHIELD BACK UP, T'CHALLA!
"GET THE SHIELD UP!"


"YOU SPEND YOUR ENTIRE LIFE LOOKING FOR THAT ONE PERFECT SOMEONE, AND WHEN YOU FIND HER, YOU THINK YOU'LL NEVER LOVE ANYTHING MORE...
"THEN YOU HAVE CHILDREN, AND REALIZE WHAT A FOOL YOU WERE TO BELIEVE THAT.
"AND NOW, I HAVE LOST EVERYTHING.
"WE HAVE ALL LOST EVERYTHING.

"MY ENTIRE LIFE I BELIEVED IN BETTER DAYS AHEAD.

"I BELIEVED IN TOMORROW.
"I HID THAT BELIEF IN MY HEART--A STRONGHOLD AGAINST A WORLD THAT DEVOURS HOPE.
"BUT NOW THE WALLS HAVE FALLEN.
"I HAVE BEEN OVERRUN."

"AND I HOPE...

"I BELIEVE...

"IN NOTHING."

THE MARVEL UNIVERSE

1961-2015

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THE ULTIMATE UNIVERSE

2000-2015

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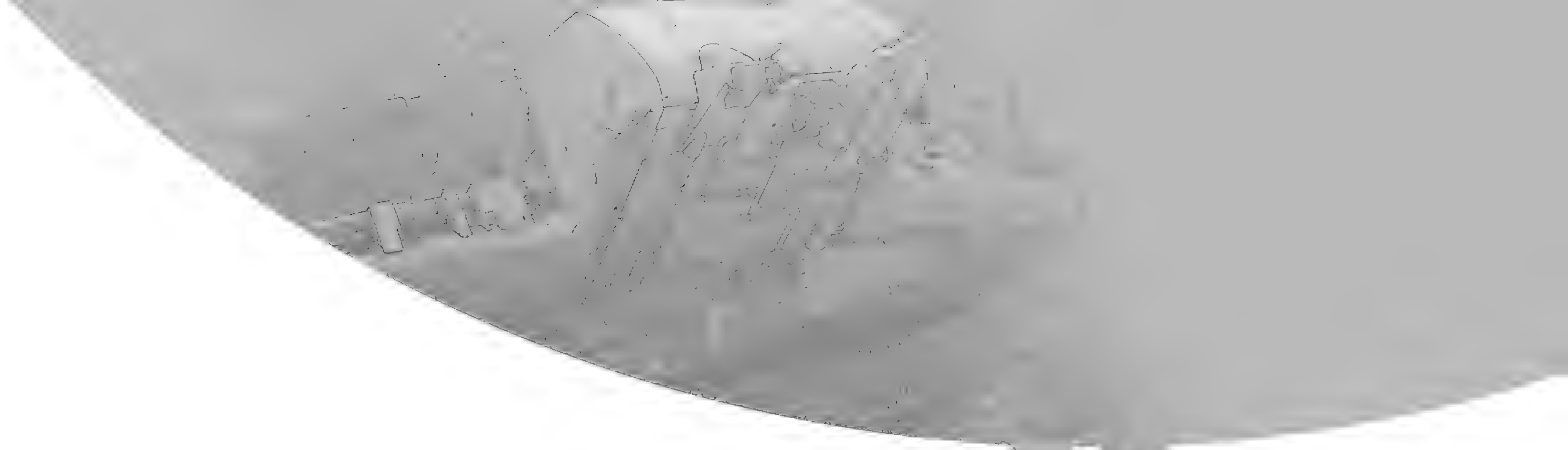


02

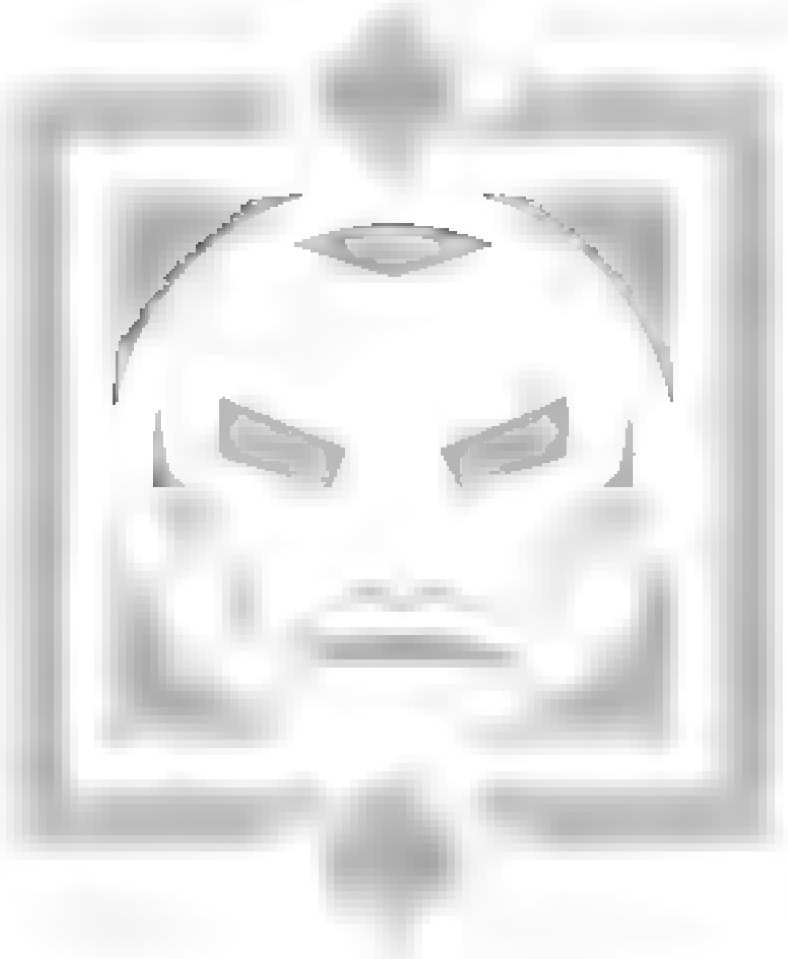
DOOM MESSIAH

"DO YOU SEE IT, BOY?
"THIS IS A TEST.
"WHICH IS FITTING, FOR GOD MEASURES US ALL IN SOME WAY.
"THIS DAY? HERE AND NOW?
"THE TEST IS YOURS.
"STEP FORWARD AND SEEK HIS FAVOR.

"HE CREATED THE HAMMER AS A CRUCIBLE FOR THE UNWORTHY.
"BUT FOR THOSE WHO ARE MORE...
KRAKAKABOOM
"IT IS AN *AWAKENING.*"
I... I DID IT.

AYE. YOU HAVE BEEN REBORN. *WORTHY.*
I AM OLD--OLDER THAN MOST--BUT BEFORE EVEN MY TIME THERE IS A LEGEND THAT THE HEAVENS WERE FULL OF STARS...
A SEA OF THEM, AND LITTLE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE DAY AND NIGHT. AND NOW, THERE ARE SO FEW.
SO WHERE DID THEY GO? AND WHY IS THERE ONE FEWER EVERY YEAR?
LOOK IN YOUR HAND. IT WAS THE *ALL-FATHER* WHO PLUCKED THE STARS FROM THE HEAVENS AND FROM EACH, FORGED OUR HAMMERS.
THEY ALL HAVE DIFFERENT NAMES--YOU WILL NAME YOURS--BUT THEY ALL SERVE THE SAME PURPOSE.
JUSTICE!
IT HAS A PURPOSE--JUST AS YOU HAVE A PURPOSE.
AND WE *THORS* ARE THE LAW, JUST AS THE *ALL-FATHER* INTENDED.
WHAT... WHAT DO I DO NOW?

NOW YOU BEND YOUR KNEE, BROTHER.
FOR GOD IS WATCHING...
"AND FROM NOW UNTIL THE END OF DAYS, WE ALL LABOR TO KEEP HIS PEACE."



GOD EMPEROR
DOOM

DOOMGARD.
WELCOME, BROTHER THOR. WELCOME TO THE MOST NOBLE OF UNDERTAKINGS--THERE IS NO HIGHER CALLING.
YES. HOWEVER, BEFORE THE ACCRUING OF HONOR--BEFORE GLORY--THERE IS *THE CHANGE.*
STEADY YOURSELF, YOUNG ONE...IT CAN BE OVERWHELMING.
THE CHANGE?
AYE. PHYSICAL CHALLENGES TO TAX THE BACK AND SHOULDERS, MENTAL ONES TO CHALLENGE THE MIND...
IT IS NO SMALL THING BECOMING A HAMMER OF GOD.
ESPECIALLY IF YOU COME FROM HUMBLE BEGINNINGS.
HE'S ASKING WHERE YOU'RE FROM, BROTHER.
UH... HIGHER AVALON.
AH! A KINGDOM IN GOOD STANDING WITH THE THRONE. I TAKE IT THEN YOU ARE WELL-LEARNED--THAT YOU KNOW YOUR HISTORIES?
YES.
THEN ENTERTAIN US, BOY...
TELL US THE STORY.

"THERE WAS NOTHING.
"FOLLOWED BY EVERYTHING.
"SWIRLING, BURNING SPECKS OF CREATION THAT CIRCLED LIFE-GIVING SUNS.
"GOD DOOM... CREATED THE LIGHT."

THEN THERE WAS EARTH. THE FIRMAMENT COOLED AND HE RAISED UP A LAND--THIS HOLY LAND--THE WORLD--AND UPON IT HE SET HIS KINGDOMS.
YES. THE KINGDOMS. AND HAVE YOU EVER TRAVELED BEYOND THE KINGDOM WHERE YOU WERE BORN, BROTHER?
ONLY HERE. ONLY FOR THE TESTING.
ONLY THIS ONCE.
IT'S NOT UNCOMMON. THE BORDERS OF EACH KINGDOM ARE CLEARLY DEFINED. TRAVEL BETWEEN THEM IS VERY OFTEN DISCOURAGED BY REQUIRING SPECIAL DISPENSATION FROM THE LOCAL BARON.
THERE ARE MANY GOOD REASONS FOR THIS--NOT ALL KINGDOMS ARE AS PEACEFUL AS HIGHER AVALON.
MANY KINGDOMS--AND THERE ARE THOSE AMONG OUR ORDER WHO WOULD SAY *MOST*--OFTEN CRAVE THE HEAVY END OF THE HAMMER.
FROM OUR HIGH SEAT HERE IN DOOMGARD, WE ALLOW NO BREAKING OF GOD'S LAWS. DOOM DEMANDS ORDER, AND ORDER PLEASES HIM.
TELL ME... DO YOU WANT TO PLEASE HIM, BROTHER?
YES.
WELL, THEN... THIS IS THE WORLD AND THERE ARE SINNERS IN IT.
LET US DO JUSTICE.

THE KINGDOM OF UTOPOLIS.
OKAY, WE'RE HERE. ARE YOU SURE OF WHAT YOU'VE FOUND?
I'M SURE WE FOUND *SOMETHING*, MINISTER POWERS. BUT AS SOON AS WE STARTED EXAMINING IT, WE KNEW WE NEEDED TO CALL IN THE EXPERTS.
HONESTLY, WE DIDN'T EVEN KNOW THAT SOMETHING LIKE THAT WAS DOWN THERE UNTIL THE EARTHQUAKE UNCOVERED IT.
IT WASN'T AN EARTHQUAKE.
OKAY, ALEX. WE'RE READY. LET'S GO.
BE CAREFUL, MINISTER. ONCE YOU GO THROUGH, THE GRAVITY REVERSES.

I THINK I'LL MANAGE.
COOL.

EXCUSE ME, FOUNDER. BUT...WHAT DID YOU MEAN *"IT WASN'T AN EARTHQUAKE"*?
ONE OF THE EXPERIMENTS I'VE BEEN CONDUCTING AT THE FOUNDATION IS MAPPING AND COMPARING THE SEISMIC ACTIVITY OF EACH KINGDOM. IT'S NOT SOMETHING WE BROADCAST.
YEAH. BECAUSE SOME PEOPLE ARE OBSESSED WITH CONTRADICTORY THEORIES ABOUT THE *"ORIGIN"* OF THE *"UNIVERSE."*
IT'S CALLED CONFIRMATION BIAS FOR A REASON, DRAGON.
I'M RIGHT TO QUESTION, BENTLEY. LOOK AT ALL THIS DOWN HERE.
THERE'S LITERALLY ***MEGATONS*** OF EVIDENCE THAT THIS WORLD IS NOT A NATURALLY OCCURRING CONSTRUCT, BUT RATHER A COMPOSITE OF SOME OTHER KIND OF--
*ANY*WAY...
WHAT DRAGON MAN IS TRYING TO SAY IS THAT THE DATA DOESN'T SUPPORT AN EARTHQUAKE.
THEN WHAT WAS IT?

OH, IT'S A *COVER.* THE EARTHQUAKE STORY IS A RUSE.
FABRICATED, I'M SURE, SO THAT THE GOOD PEOPLE OF UTOPOLIS DON'T FREAK OUT WHEN THEY LEARN ANOTHER *HULK* GOT LOOSE ON THE MAINLAND.
MY GOD...
YEAH. HULKS ARE THE WORST.
THAT *MUST* BE IT.
THE SUBATOMIC STRUCTURE OF THIS OBJECT IS...UNUSUAL. FIRST GLANCE, MY BEST GUESS WOULD BE SOME KIND OF FABRICATED EXOTIC MATTER.
ALEX... THIS REALLY IS QUITE SOMETHING.
SO WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE FOR US TO DO, MINISTER?
WHAT DO YOU THINK?
YOU'RE A DIGGER...

DIG IT OUT.

THE ALL-FATHER IS GOD KING OF THIS WORLD.
BUT THE WORLD *YOU KNOW*--THE KINGDOMS--EXTEND ONLY FROM THE GREAT OCEAN IN THE NORTHERN HEMISPHERE TO THE BADLANDS IN THE SOUTH.
OUR HOME, THE PRECINCT OF *DOOMGARD*, LIES WEST OF *DOOMSTADT* AND *CASTLE DOOM* ITSELF.
LOOK NOW!
BELOW US IS *HIGHER AVALON*, FROM WHICH YOU HAIL. AND THE IMPETUS FOR TODAY'S JUSTICE.
IT LOOKS SO DIFFERENT FROM UP HERE.
AYE. NEWFOUND POWER LEADS TO NEW PERSPECTIVE, BOY--WHICH WILL SERVE YOU WELL FROM THIS DAY FORWARD.
"ALL TOLD, THERE ARE ALMOST ONE HUNDRED MAJOR AND MINOR HOUSES...YOUR HIGHER AVALON BEING ONLY ONE.
"WE HAVE JURISDICTION OVER ALL OF THEM. UNDERSTAND? EVEN NOW, YOUR FORMER LIEGE, BARON JAMES BRADDOCK, *WAITS* FOR US TO DELIVER GOD'S JUSTICE."
ONCE, AS A BOY, I SAW THE BARON FROM THE STREET. HE WAVED AT THOSE OF US GATHERED IN THE CROWD.
HE SEEMED ABOVE THE WHIMS OF OTHERS--CERTAINLY ABOVE WAITING ON US.
YES. TO A PEASANT, A BARON WOULD SURELY SEEM A KING. JUST AS TO A BARON, A KING MIGHT SEEM A GOD.
FOR SOME, THIS IS A COMFORT, FOR OTHERS, IT IS LESS SO.
NO SMALL NUMBER OF GOD'S CHILDREN SPEND THEIR DAYS IN THE LIGHT OF DOOM'S FAVOR.
OTHERS FALL OUTSIDE HIS GRACE, *BUT MANY*... LIVE THEIR LIVES IN BETWEEN.
THIS, I BELIEVE, IS THE UNREFINED STATE OF MAN. THE BELIEFS OF ONE PUTTING THEM IN CONFLICT WITH ANOTHER--KINGDOMS AT WAR WITH OTHER KINGDOMS.

BAR SINISTER.
YOU LOOKED UP AT YOUR BARON WITH ADORATION AS HE WAVED AT YOU. I TELL YOU TRULY, OTHERS THERE IN THE CROWD WOULD HAVE PREFERRED TO PULL HIM DOWN.
THE ENVIOUS FORGET TO WHAT STATION THEY ARE BORN. THEIR NATURAL POSITION CHAFES, AND THEY CRAVE TO BE SOMETHING MORE.
IT IS A *SICKNESS*, AND WE ARE BUT ONE OF *GOD'S CURES*.
MOVE ASIDE.
MAKE WAY FOR *JUSTICE*.
AH...THE LAW.
HOW VERY *TRASHY*.

BARON SINISTER.
IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE WILL OF YOUR MAKER, YOU HAVE BEEN SUMMONED TO CASTLE DOOM TO ANSWER FOR THE CRIME OF DISCORD.
ARE YOU SURE YOU HAVE THE RIGHT MAN?
I AM.
BUT ONE COULD RESIST IF ONE WERE SO INCLINED.
AND ON THE OFF CHANCE I'M FOUND GUILTY...WILL THERE BE *SENTENCING* TODAY AS WELL?
THE HIGH COURT HAS BEEN ASSEMBLED TO BEAR WITNESS.
WRITE THE WORDS, BROTHER...GOD IS WAITING.
LIKE THIS?
YES. *FEHU-NAUTIZ-URUZ* WILL ALWAYS RETURN YOU TO DOOMSTADT.
WELL. IF I HAVE AN AUDIENCE...THEN I'M INCLINED TO GIVE THEM A SHOW.
I WILL PLAY THE ACCUSED, AND YOU WILL BE MY ESCORTS--OLD MAN THUNDER AND HIS WARD, LIGHTNING.
SHALL WE?
VERY WELL.
KKRA
DOOM
"TO DOOMSTADT...

"WHERE A WORLD-EATING SENTINEL STANDS GUARD OVER CASTLE DOOM.
DOMM
"WHERE THE HIGH COURT CONVENES.
"AND WHERE *GOD DOOM HIMSELF* SITS IN JUDGMENT ON HIS THRONE, YGGDRASIL--THE WORLD TREE."
AS ORDERED:
THE ACCUSED.

BARON SINISTER...AS *SHERIFF OF AGAMATTO*, I SERVE AS THE RIGHT HAND OF DOOM--HIS IRREVOCABLE VOICE--AND THE ARBITER OF THIS PRECEDING.
AS SUCH, UNLESS THERE IS...DIVINE INTERVENTION, MY JUDGMENT WILL BE FINAL. ***I AM THE LAW.***
YOU HAVE BEEN CHARGED WITH DISCORD BY THE HOUSE BRADDOCK.
I HAVE BEEN PRESENTED WITH EVIDENCE SHOWING THAT YOU HAVE SECRETLY--AND ILLEGALLY--ALIGNED YOURSELF WITH HYPERION, THE BARON OF UTOPOLIS, IN OPPOSITION TO HIGHER AVALON.
LAUGHABLE.
AND THAT YOU ARE IN VIOLATION OF ALL KNOWN BORDER TREATIES BY SUPPLYING--
SHERIFF. THIS IS AN ***ABSURD*** ACCUSATION. BEYOND THE FACT THAT I HAVE NO DESIRE TO ENGAGE IN SOME GREAT GAME OF INTRIGUE...
...THERE IS ANOTHER PROBLEM WITH THIS STORY: THERE IS AN *OCEAN* BETWEEN MY KINGDOM AND THEIRS.
WE KNOW THAT YOU HIRED THE *IRON PIRATES* AS COURIERS, SINISTER.
LIES. AND EVEN IF THEY AREN'T, YOU COULDN'T PROVE IT.
ARE THERE ANY OTHER CHARGES?
IS THIS ALWAYS HOW IT IS? SO... FORMAL?
WITHIN THE BORDERS OF EACH KINGDOM, AS LONG AS THE RESOLUTE LAWS OF DOOM ARE FOLLOWED, HE PERMITS EACH BARON OR BARONESS COMPLETE CONTROL OF THEIR PROVINCE.
BUT AS FOR DISPUTES BETWEEN KINGDOMS... THAT IS THIS COURT'S DOMAIN.

"SOMETIMES SKIRMISHES ARE RESOLVED SO AMICABLY THAT FORMAL ALLIANCES ARE FORMED.
"LIKE THOSE BETWEEN THE UPPER AND LOWER KINGDOMS OF EGYPTIA.
"OFTEN THEY ARE SETTLED UNEVENLY--THERE ARE WINNERS AND LOSERS IN THE COURT OF DOOM.
"SUCH AS THE FORMER BARONESS PRYOR, UNSEATED AND CONTAINED BY THE ABSENT BARON SUMMERS.
"AND THEN THERE ARE THE CONQUERED. THE HORSEMEN ALL ONCE HAD THEIR OWN KINGDOMS, NOW THEY BEND THEIR KNEE TO THE BARON APOCALYPSE.
"YOU ASKED ME IF IT IS ALWAYS THIS FORMAL...YES, IT IS. *UNTIL IT IS NOT.*
"ALL OF THIS IS DECIDED BY THE SHERIFF. AS HE STATED EARLIER...HE WILL DECIDE THEIR GUILT OR INNOCENCE AND DETERMINE THEIR SENTENCE."
AND THE FINAL CHARGE...
WORDS HAVE MEANING, AND YOU HAVE ALSO BEEN ACCUSED OF LIBEL, MY LORD.
OH. THAT.
ALL I SAID WAS SHE LOOKED LIKE A COW.
LADY MEGGAN IS *WITH CHILD.*
YOURS? WELL, THAT'S EVEN WORSE, ISN'T IT?

TRUTH IS SOMETIMES A MALLEABLE THING. *JUSTICE*, ON THE OTHER HAND...
I HAVE MEASURED THE EVIDENCE PROVIDED AGAINST YOUR...PREDICTABLE DENIALS, BARON, AND I FIND YOU *GUILTY*. YOU WILL PAY RESTITUTION. EITHER IN GOLD OR TERRITORY.
I THINK NOT.
EXCUSE ME?
I SAID: I THINK NOT.
I CHOOSE TO MEET MY ACCUSER IN THE ARENA. AS A BARON OF THE KINGDOMS OF DOOM, THIS IS A LUXURY AFFORDED TO ME.
BRADDOCK CAN REFUSE, OF COURSE. BUT IF HE DOES, THE CHARGES MUST BE WITHDRAWN... THEN THAT WILL BE THAT, AND I WILL BE ON MY WAY.
IT *IS* THE LAW, BARON BRADDOCK.
WHAT SAY YOU, BRADDOCK...CONSIDER YOURSELF ABOVE THE LAW? ABOVE *GOD'S* LAW?
I WILL GLADLY TAKE UP AR--
I WASN'T SPEAKING TO *YOU*, BARON... BUT YOUR LORD BROTHER.
WHAT?
OR WOULD YOU RATHER RETURN TO THE FIELDS OF AVALON, YOUNG MASTER? MILK MORE COWS.
I WILL FIGHT YOU!
BRIAN! THIS IS NO GAME...
I CAN DO THIS, JAMIE. I WANT TO.
I *HAVE* TO.
...
PLEASE BE CAREFUL, BROTHER.
HE'S MORE THAN HE SEEMS.

THERE'S NO DENYING THAT YOU'RE A STRAPPING YOUNG LAD, MASTER BRIAN.
STUN STICKS TO UNCONSCIOUSNESS IS THE ORDER OF THE DAY, BUT I'D WAGER THAT NOT ONLY COULD YOU LIFT A SMALL CASTLE, BUT YOU COULD ALSO BEAT ME TO PULP WITH JUST A NORMAL STAVE, COULDN'T YOU?
LET'S JUST SAY...I'M STRONG ENOUGH.
WELL, NOW YOU'VE GONE AND MADE ME CURIOUS.

WHAAM
LOOK, MAESTRO! LORD BRADDOCK HIT HIM SO HARD, THE BARON CAME ASUNDER!
HMMMM. IF ONLY DEFEATING SINISTER WAS THAT EASY.
BRIAN! LOOK OUT!
CONSIDER... MY...THIRST...

FOR... CURIOSITY...
QUENCHED!
DO YOU KNOW YET, LORD BRIAN...
THE CHILD YOUR WIFE CARRIES--IS IT A BOY OR A GIRL?
I WONDER, WILL THE LADY NAME IT BRIAN IF IT'S BOY AND, PERHAPS...BRIANNA IF IT'S A GIRL?
I WOULD HOPE NOT. SENTIMENTALITY IS SICKENING ENOUGH, BUT BURDENING A CHILD WITH THE NAME OF THEIR FAILED, DEAD FATHER?
THAT'S JUST SO *COMMON.*
RRARRRRRR!
NO!
BRIAN!

HMMMMMMM
MMMMMMMMMMMM
ALL OF YOU...
...ON YOUR KNEES.

I CARE LITTLE FOR YOUR PETTY DISAGREEMENTS, YET DOOM HAS SAVED YOU, YOUNG LORD BRADDOCK. PERHAPS GRATITUDE IS IN ORDER?
HIGHER AVALON SITS BELOW THE KINGDOM OF MANHATTAN AND IS LONG RUMORED TO BE THE MOST FAVORABLE CONDUIT FOR REACHING *THE SILENT CHAMBERS.*
YOU HAVE HEARD THIS, YES? THE SILENT CHAMBERS WHERE HERETICS AND THIEVES WORK TO CAST ME DOWN FROM MY THRONE.
I HAVE.
DID YOU KNOW THAT WHEN FACED WITH CONFESSION, THERE IS ONE NAME THEY WHISPER... AND IT IS *BRADDOCK?*
YOU WILL TELL ME WHERE I MIGHT FIND THIS HIDDEN CITADEL, AND YOU WILL TELL ME NOW.
I...I'M SORRY. I DON'T KNOW WHERE IT IS.
IF ONE IS GIVEN FULL DOMINION OVER A KINGDOM, IS NOT THAT KINGDOM--ALL OF IT--HIS DOMAIN?
SO I MUST ASK--IF YOU SEE NOTHING, IF YOU SAY NOTHING, IF YOU DO NOTHING...WHAT GOOD ARE YOU?
I FIND YOU AT FAULT. DOOMED. YOUR EYES, YOUR TONGUE, YOUR HANDS AND FEET ARE ALL FORFEIT.
NO!
KING DOOM. *WAIT!*
IT WAS NOT MY BROTHER THEY SPOKE OF...IT WAS ME.

THEN YOU ARE GUILTY, MY LORD. THORS, PLEASE PLACE THE BARON UNDER ARREST FOR HIS PUNISHMENT TO BE--
THOOM
NO. A BARON OF ONE OF MY KINGDOMS HAS BETRAYED ME-- A CANCER THAT CANNOT BE ALLOWED TO REMAIN. PULL THE ENTIRE HOUSE DOWN.
THE ENTIRE ROYAL FAMILY IS TO BE PUBLICLY--
VICTOR.
MERCY.
YES, SUSAN.
OF COURSE.

THE LORD BRIAN IS ELEVATED TO BARON. YOUNG MASTER, THE KINGDOM IS NOW YOURS. SEE TO IT THAT YOU SERVE ME BETTER THAN YOUR BROTHER WHO RULED BEFORE YOU.
FURTHERMORE, I ORDER BARON SINISTER TO BE PUBLICLY WHIPPED, AND THE FORMER BARON OF AVALON REMOVED FROM MY SIGHT.
AYE, ALL-FATHER.
DO WELL, BROTHER. I AM SORRY.
AND THANK YOU FOR YOUR MERCY, MY KING.
THE MERCY WAS FOR THE INNOCENT. I HAVE NONE FOR YOU, BRADDOCK...
YOU GET THE *SHIELD.*
VALERIA, ARE YOU COMING?
I'LL CATCH UP, MOM. I NEED TO SPEAK WITH THE SHERIFF FIRST.

I HOPE WHATEVER NEWS YOU HAVE IS MUNDANE, VALERIA...
I WOULD RATHER BE DONE WITH EXCITEMENT FOR THE DAY.
I'M NOT SURE I CAN PROMISE YOU THAT, STEPHEN. AS YOU KNOW, THE TWO OFFICES WE HOLD REPRESENT THE DUELING IDEOLOGIES OF MY FATHER...
YOU ARE *THE LAW,* WHILE I AM HIS LEFT HAND--*THE FOUNDATION.*
YES. SCIENCE CALLED *DISCOVERY,* AND RELIGION CALLED *DOOM.*
EXACTLY. SO IN THE PAST, OUR TWO INDEPENDENT BRANCHES--YOU AND I--HAVE HAD OUR FAIR SHARE OF DISAGREEMENTS...
WHICH IS WHY FATHER CREATED CERTAIN PROTOCOLS TO FOLLOW IN THE CASE OF FUTURE IDEOLOGICAL BREACHES.
YOUNG LADY...WHY DO I FEEL LIKE YOU'RE GETTING READY TO TELL ME SOMETHING I SHOULD ALREADY KNOW?
ACTUALLY...THAT'S EXACTLY THE OPPOSITE OF WHAT'S HAPPENING HERE. I'M BRINGING THIS TO YOU *IMMEDIATELY,* AS I BELIEVE WE'VE JUST HAD SUCH AN INCIDENT.
MINISTER POWERS UNCOVERED SOMETHING... INTERESTING.
OH?
COULDN'T HELP MYSELF, SIR.
I JUST LOVE BRIGHT, SHINY THINGS.

I'VE LOOKED OVER THE FINDINGS IN ALEX'S INITIAL REPORT.
LIKE MUCH OF WHAT LIES BELOW THE SURFACE OF THIS PLANET, THE *"OBJECT"* IS MADE OF SOME FAIRLY EXOTIC STUFF.
STRUCTURALLY DIFFERENT THAN WHAT WE'VE ENCOUNTERED BEFORE, BUT WELL WITHIN WHAT I WOULD CALL THE REALM OF *"POSSIBLE MATTER."*
VALERIA, I'M NOT SURE WHAT--
KEEP READING. THIRD PARAGRAPH OF THE ANALYSIS, AFTER THE DESIGN SCHEMATIC OF THE OBJECT. IT'S SOMETHING YOU--AND THE LAW--MIGHT CALL IMPOSSIBLE.
POSSIBLY ***HERETICAL...***
AS THE CARBON DATING OF THE OBJECT PUTS ITS AGE SOMEWHERE WELL BEFORE THE CREATIO--
THAT'S QUITE ENOUGH, VALERIA.
IF TRUE...THIS IS ***SCHISM.***
I WILL SEND AGENTS TO SEAL OFF THE SITE, AND YOU WILL RECALL YOUR TEAM--SUSPENDING ALL RESEARCH ACTIVITIES IMMEDIATELY.
I AM INVOKING... ***QUARANTINE.***

THE SHIELD.
TWO HUNDRED AND FIFTY FEET TALL AND SIXTEEN THOUSAND MILES LONG--EACH BIT BUILT BY GOD DOOM'S OWN HANDS.
AS GOOD A PLACE AS ANY FOR A MAN TO DIE.
ONCE I SAW YOU FROM THE STREET AS A BOY. I LOOKED UP AND IMAGINED YOU A GOD, OR IF NOT A GOD AT LEAST SOMETHING GREATER THAN JUST A MAN.
AND NOW YOU GET TO WATCH ME FALL.
LOOK HOW FAR YOU'VE COME.

I HAVE ABSOLUTELY NO DESIRE TO SEE SUCH A THING, MY LORD.
THEN THIS WILL BE A *LESSON* FOR YOU--ONE YOU SHOULD LEARN NOW AND REMEMBER FOR ALL YOUR DAYS.
THERE ARE NO GREAT MEN ABOVE REPROACH, JUST GOD AND HIS WHIMS TO WHICH WE ARE MERCY.
I'M SORRY... BUT IT'S TIME, BARON.
HAVE YOU ANY FINAL WORDS?
WHEN THEY COME TO PULL YOU DOWN, DON'T LET THEM DRAG YOU, SON.
YOU JUMP...
...AND TAKE AS MANY OF THE BASTARDS WITH YOU AS YOU CAN.

SNIFF
WHAT'S THAT I SMELL?
FRESH MEAT, SO SWEET.
FFZZ
ZZZZZZZ
CARVE YOU UP, PASS YOU OUT.
YEAH, I'M GONNA SHARE YOU WITH THE OTHERS.
BUT ONLY ON ONE CONDITION...
I'M KEEPIN' YOUR BRAINS FOR MYSELF.

"THIS IS THE HORROR THAT LIES BEYOND THE WALL.
"THE DEADLANDS.

"BUILT TO KEEP OUT THE NIGHTMARES THAT LIVE THERE, THE SHIELD HOLDS BACK NOT JUST THE ZOMBIE HORDE...
"BUT ALSO THE SEASONAL MIGRATION OF THE DRONE ARMY THAT IS THE *ANNIHILATION WAVE.*
"BOTH OF WHICH PALE IN COMPARISON TO THE DAMNED *ULTRON A.I.*
"SELF-REPLICATING, SUPER-EVOLVING AUTOMATONS THAT SYSTEMATICALLY TRY TO BREAK CONTAINMENT EVERY GENERATION."
WE, AND THE SENTINELS WHO GUARD THE SHIELD, HAVE LOST MANY DEFENDING IT OVER THE YEARS.
IT IS NO SMALL BURDEN, THIS CALLING OF OURS...AS YOU ARE LEARNING NOW. AYE?
AYE.

CASTLE DOOM.
IT'S DONE.
HE DIED WELL FOR SOMEONE WHO JUST THIS MORNING HAD THE WORLD AT HIS FEET.
YES. WELL...IT WAS THE WILL OF *GOD*, WASN'T IT?
WHO ARE WE TO QUESTION SUCH A THING?
PROVIDENCE...THE CRUCIBLE OF THE FAITHFUL.
IF THAT WILL BE ALL FOR TODAY, SHERIFF-- THE GREAT HALL OF DOOMGARD CALLS...
AND I LONG FOR THE LOVING EMBRACE OF MEAD.

UNFORTUNATELY, THERE'S ONE MORE THING I NEED BEFORE YOU'RE DONE FOR THE DAY.
WHAT COULD THERE POSSIBLY--
I NEED AN OLD HAND AT THE WHEEL FOR WHAT IS A VERY OLD PROBLEM.
SCHISM.
WE'VE SUFFERED A BREACH...AND IT MUST BE CONTAINED.
SHERIFF, IF THE HERETICS OF *A.I.M.* HAVE ONCE AGAIN STARTED--
NO. THIS HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH SEDITIOUS CONSPIRACY STORIES SPUN BY ***ADVANCED IDEA MYTHOLOGIES,*** OLD FRIEND. THIS IS REAL.
THIS IS CONCRETE. THERE IS AN OBJECT...
I NEED IT QUARANTINED...
"AND LATER... EXAMINED."

QUARANTINED?
YES. CHILDREN FEAR STORIES OF MONSTERS, MEN FEAR THE SPECTRE OF DEATH... AND GOD, HE FEARS *THE LOSS OF BELIEVERS.*
QUARANTINE IS FOR THINGS THAT CAUSE DOUBT.
WE STOPPED AS SOON AS THE WORD CAME DOWN. A BIT TOO QUICKLY, IF YOU ASK ME...
LOTS OF INTERESTING STUFF HERE. HARD TO KEEP MY HANDS OFF IT.
DON'T TOUCH. UNDERSTAND?
WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY DOUBT?
YOU NOW LIVE IN A FLOATING CASTLE--IT'S A *STRANGE* WORLD OUT THERE. CHAOTIC.
SOMETIMES THINGS OCCUR THAT SEEM TO CONTRADICT THE GODHEAD OF DOOM.
WELL, ARE THEY REAL?
DON'T TOUCH. DON'T TOUCH. OH, THAT LOOKS INTERESTING...

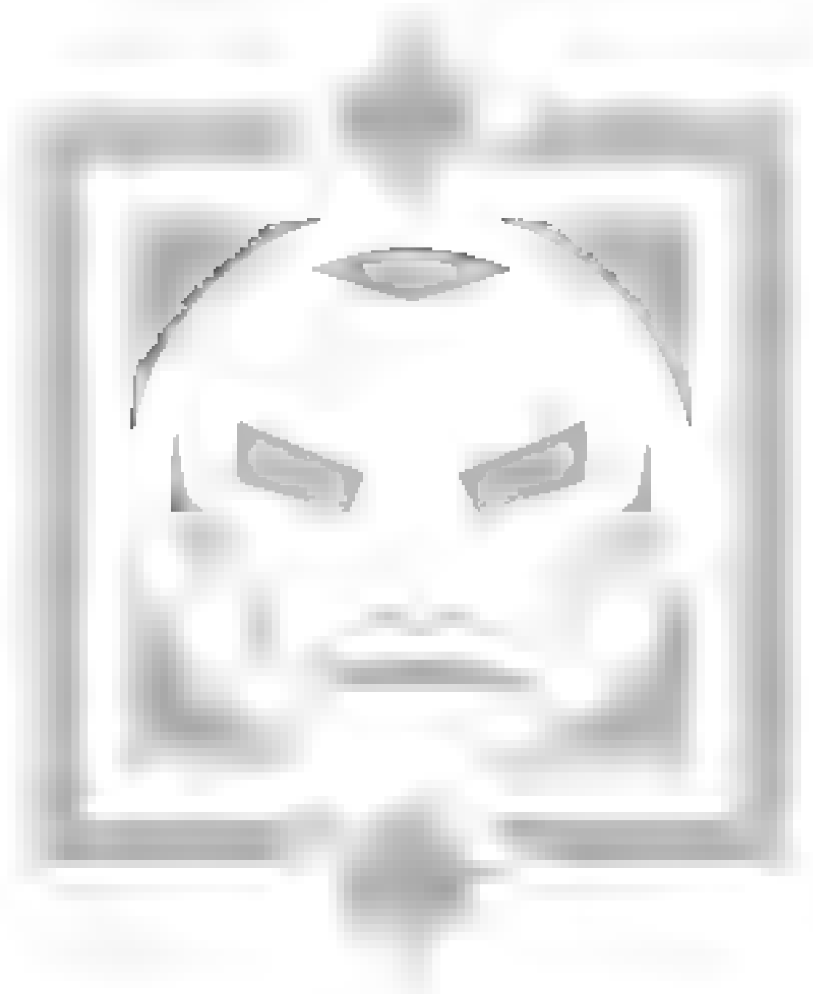
THE QUESTION ISN'T ARE THEY REAL, IT'S DO THEY MATTER.
THERE IS AN ORDER TO THIS WORLD, AND THAT ORDER HAS A NAME...
IT IS *DOOM*, AND THERE IS NOTHING LURKING IN THE SHADOWS THAT CAN THREATEN HIS REIGN.
IF THERE WAS, WE WOULD STAND AGAINST--
GOD FORGIVE ME, IT'S JUST SO--
OH, NO...
STOP!
ULP! IT OPENED...
STAY BACK.
WHAT IS IT?
WHAT'S IN THERE?
WHAT DO YOU SEE?

MY GODDOOMED GRAVE.
GO!
TPPFFFUNKT
HURK!
GO! GO NOW!
TELL THE SHERIFF THAT WE FOUND *DEATH* HERE!

FLY, BROTHER!
FLY!
KRAKAD
STHU
ARRGGHH!
ZZZZNNN

WHAT IS THIS PLACE?

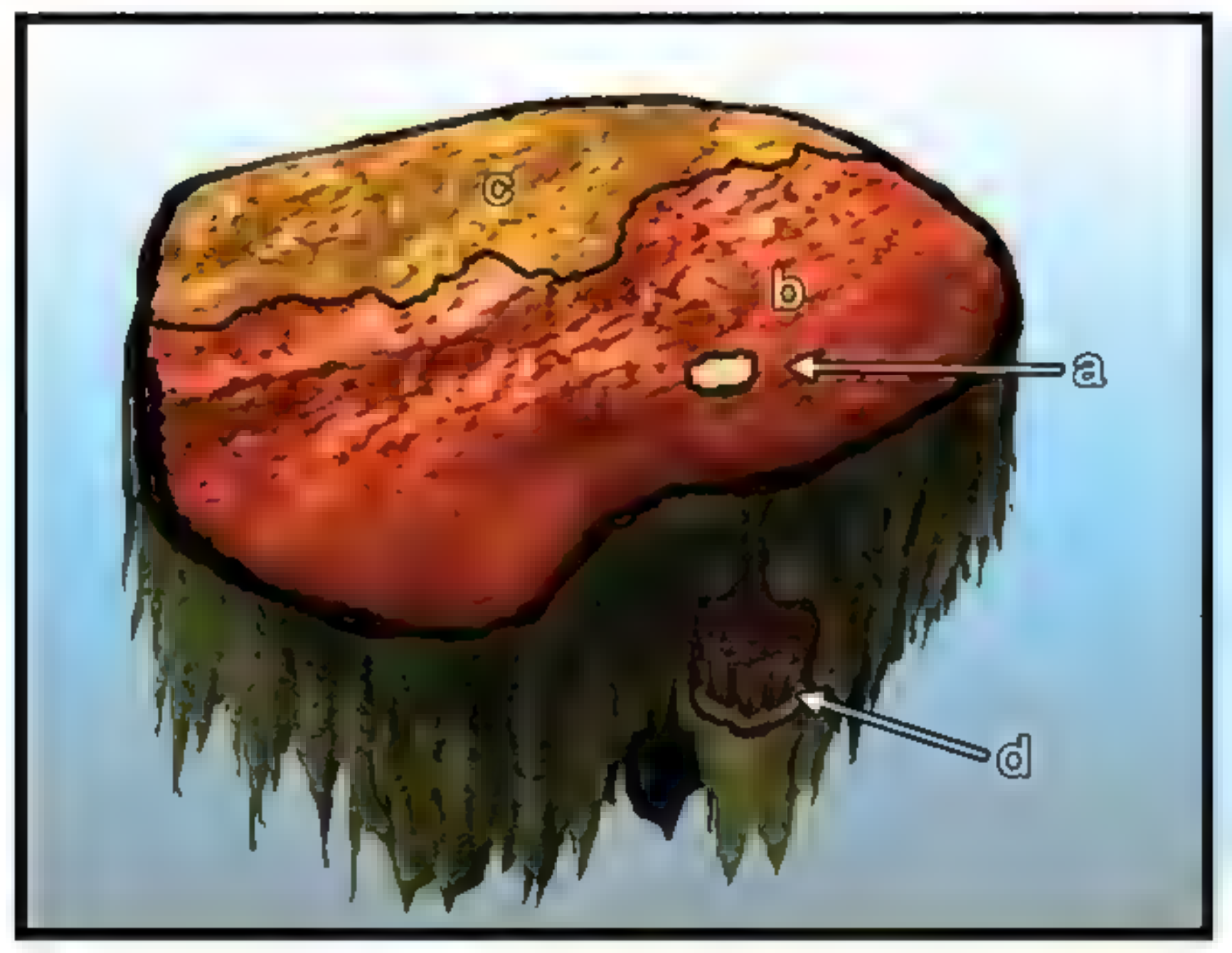
NOT OUR EARTH. NOT ANY PLANET IN OUR NATIVE GALAXY.
BE-DOOP.
But we're alive, so the design you stole worked.
I've also accessed the Raft's diagnostics. The compression of all space-time might have led to some kind of external distortion while we were in stasis--but there is something very wrong with these readings.
THANOS! I FOUND THIS ONE TRYING TO SLIP AWAY.
PERHAPS HE CAN TELL US--
YES, PROXIMA...
PERHAPS HE CAN.
TELL ME, CREATURE. TELL ME...
WHERE... ARE WE?
TH-THIS IS DOOM'S WORLD...
WHICH HE MADE TO TEST BOTH THE FAITHFUL AND THE UNFORGIVEN.
THE FIRMAMENT, CREATED WITH HIS OWN HANDS.
I WANT A *NAME*, YOU DITHERING, FEEBLE WORM.
THIS PLACE?
THE HIGH BORN CALL IT LATVERION. BELIEVERS CALL IT GOD'S KINGDOM. BUT EVERYONE ELSE-- WE COMMON FOLK-- CALL IT SOMETHING ELSE.
WE CALL IT...



BATTLEWORLD

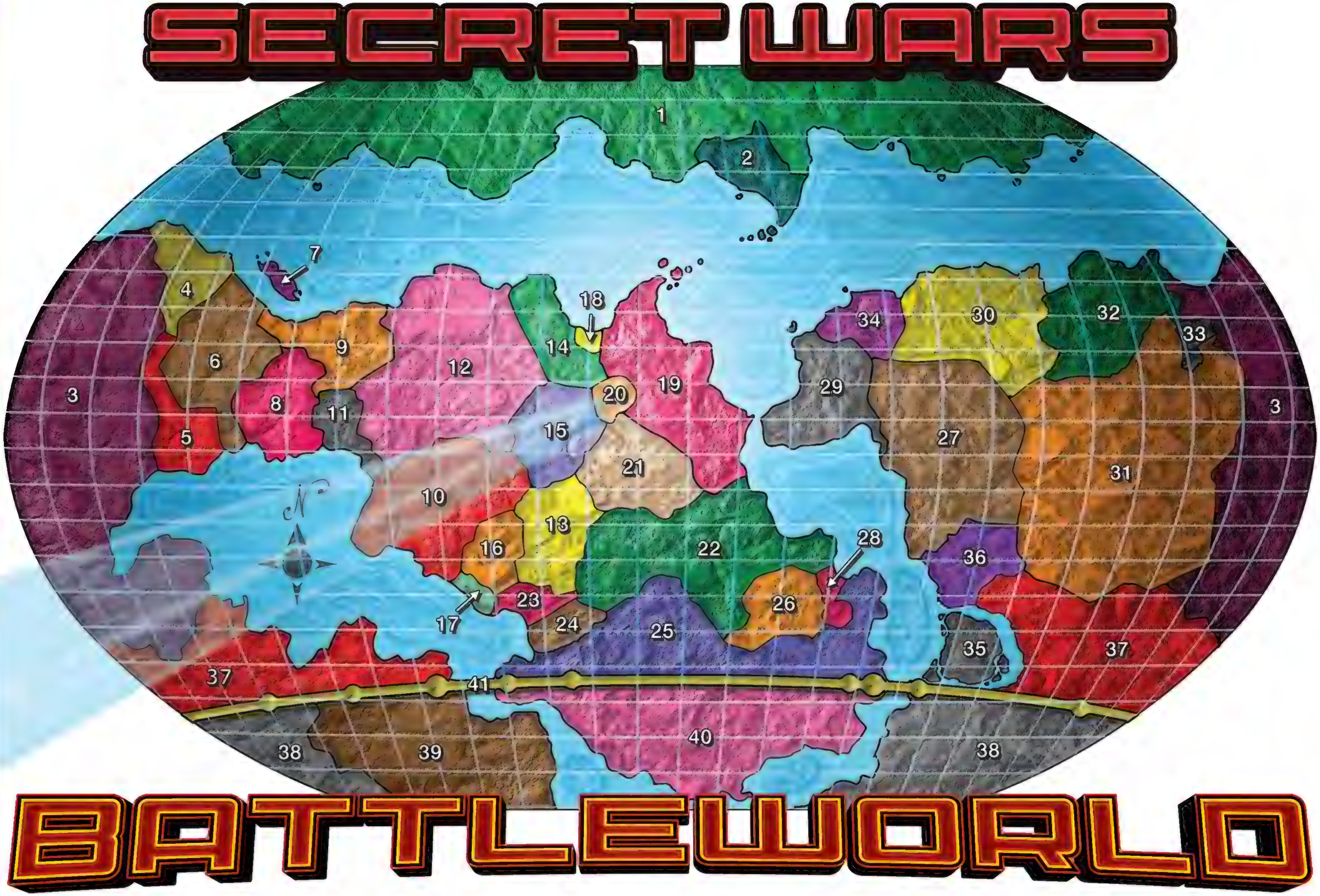
SECRET WARS BATTLEWORLD

1. GREENLAND
2. DYSTOPIA
3. DOMAIN OF APOCALYPSE
4. EGYPTIA
5. TECHNOPOLIS
6. VALLEY OF DOOM
7. SPIDER-ISLAND
8. THE REGENCY
9. KING JAMES' ENGLAND
10. WEIRDWORLD
11. K'UN LUN
12. UTOPOLIS
13. NEW MARS
14. DOOMGARD
15. HIGHER AVALON
16. ARACHNIA
17. MARVILLE
18. THE EYE OF AGAMOTTO
19. DOOMSTADT
20. MANHATTAN
21. THE CITY
22. THE WARZONE
23. NEW QUACK CITY
24. THE FAR EAST
25. VALLEY OF FLAME
26. THE HYDRA EMPIRE
27. 2099
28. HALA FIELD
29. THE MONARCHY OF M
30. SENTINEL TERRITORIES
31. THE WASTELANDS
32. MUTOPIA
33. WESTCHESTER
34. KILLVILLE
35. ARCADIA
36. BAR SINISTER
37. LIMBO
38. THE DEADLANDS
39. PERFECTION
40. NEW XANDAR
41. THE SHIELD



20. MANHATTAN

a. ATTILAN
b. MANHATTAN - EARTH-616
(Marvel Universe)
c. MANHATTAN - EARTH-1610
(Ultimate Universe)
d. MONSTER METROPOLIS
(Below MANHATTAN - EARTH 616)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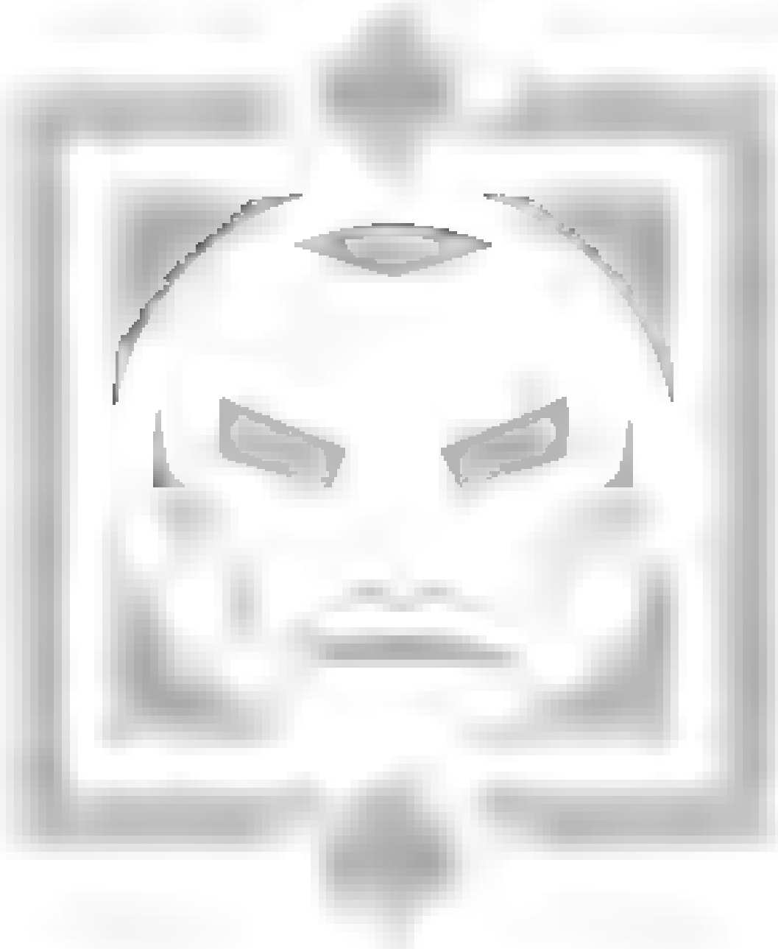
03

THE EYE OF DOOM



AFFAIRS OF STATE

SOME GOOD NEWS TO START: NO REPORTS OF ANY MAJOR INCIDENTS FROM THE SHIELD IN THE LAST WEEK.
THERE WERE A FEW MINOR SKIRMISHES IN THE KINGDOMS: THE INFERNO SMOLDERS AS USUAL, THE GREEN NORTH RAGES...
WE HAVE SCATTERED REPORTS OF A TRAVELER ILLEGALLY CROSSING KINGDOM BORDERS IN MUTANT TERRITORY, BUT INQUISITORS HAVE BEEN DISPATCHED AND I AWAIT FURTHER INFORMATION...
OH. AND WHILE ***BARON SINISTER*** MADE GOOD ON THE RESTITUTION HE OWED HIGHER AVALON, HE COULD NOT RESIST ***TAUNTING*** THE BRADDOCK CLAN ON THEIR RECENT LOSS.
HE HAD A...MOST ***UNFLATTERING*** STATUE OF BARON JAMES CONSTRUCTED AND DELIVERED. I TELL YOU THIS TO SIMPLY NOTE THAT, SOONER OR LATER, WE'RE GOING TO HAVE TO GIVE THAT MAN THE SLAP HE DESERVES.
WHY DO YOU BOTHER WITH THIS, STEPHEN?
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
YOU KNOW FULL WELL WHAT I MEAN. THIS ***BANALITY...***
...THIS TEDIOUS RECORD-KEEPING OF MINOR TRANSGRESSIONS.
NO MORE TEDIOUS THAN THIS DISAGREEMENT WE HAVE HAD MANY, MANY TIMES, MY LORD. YOU KNOW FULL WELL WHY I DO IT.
YOU ARE ***OMNIPOTENT,*** NOT ***OMNISCIENT.*** THE DANGER TO YOUR THRONE, AND THIS WORLD--THE ***LAST*** WORLD--COMES FROM WHAT WE DO NOT KNOW.
YES. BUT THIS IS A WORLD LIKE ANY OTHER WORLD OF OLD...
...FULL OF DANGER. AND WE WILL FACE SUCH THINGS AS WE ALWAYS HAVE: ***TOGETHER,*** AND IN THE ORDER IN WHICH THEY PRESENT THEMSELVES.
I REMEMBER ALL OF OUR DISAGREEMENTS, STEPHEN. AND YOUR REPORTS STILL CONCERN ME LITTLE.

YOU'RE IN A DAMN TRICKY MOOD TODAY, AREN'T YOU?
THE TROUBLES OF GODS ARE INFINITE AND BEYOND MAN'S UNDERSTANDING...
BUT IT WOULDN'T TAKE A GOD TO DIVINE THAT, *THIS DAY,* THE SAME IS TRUE OF YOU.
WHAT'S WRONG, OLD FRIEND?
LIKE EVERYONE ON THIS WORLD, I KNOW THAT YOU ARE GOD. BUT *UNLIKE* THEM, I REMEMBER WHAT WAS...
I REMEMBER YOU AND I *MAKING* ALL OF THIS. SAVING WHAT WE COULD. CREATING WHAT WE COULD NOT.
AND WHEN WE DISAGREE...
...I REMEMBER THAT *I* COULD HAVE BEEN GOD AND NOT YOU.
AND *I* REMEMBER THAT YOU DID NOT *WANT* IT.
I STILL DON'T...
BUT I *DO* REMEMBER...AND KNOW HOW PRECIOUS WHAT WE HAVE LEFT IS. SO I GUARD IT FIERCELY.

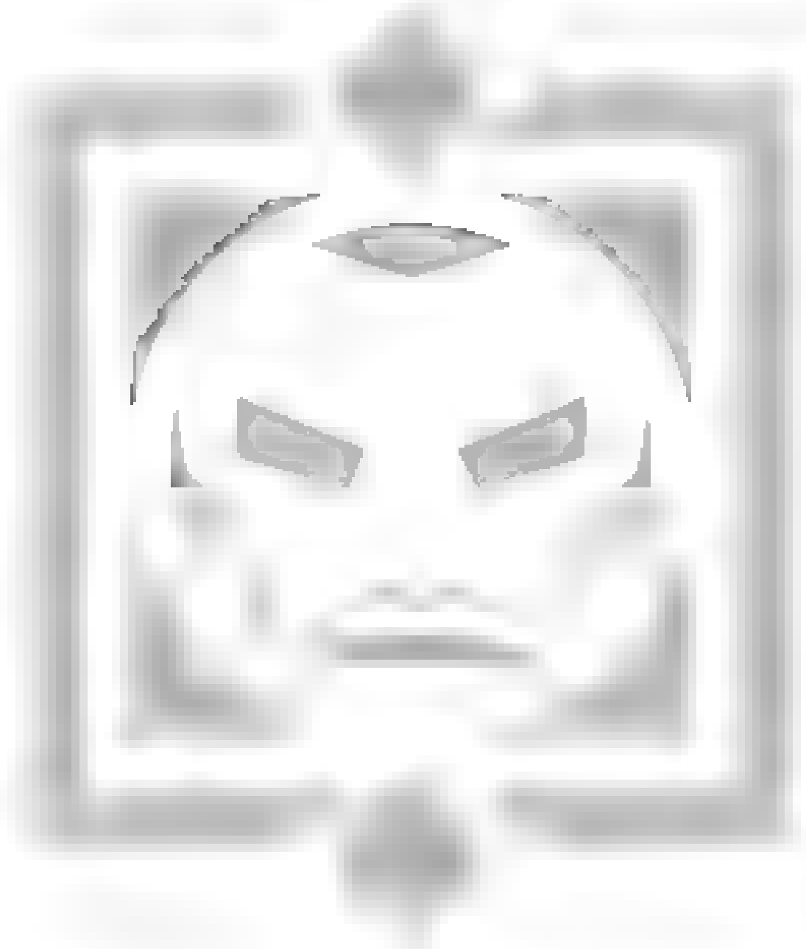
WHICH IS WHY I AM NOT CONCERNED.
I DO NOT KNOW EVERYTHING, BUT I DO KNOW THAT YOU ARE OUT THERE...KEEPING WHAT SHOULD BE HIDDEN SECRET, UNCOVERING THAT WHICH SHOULD BE KNOWN.
YOU HAVE MY FAITH IN YOU... THE TRUST OF AN ALL-POWERFUL GOD.
THE FULL FAVOR OF *DOOM.*
...
THANK YOU, VICTOR.
OF COURSE.
SO...DO WE HAVE ANY OTHER TRULY PRESSING BUSINESS?
ACTUALLY, THERE WAS ONE OTHER--
HOLD ON.
WHAT IS IT?
THE UNKNOWN BECOMING KNOWN, I'M AFRAID...
FOREBODING NEWS FROM *DOOMGARD.*

LATER. THE KINGDOM OF UTOPOLIS.
IT'S WORSE THAN I INITIALLY FEARED...
WE HAVE *FALLEN.*
ARE YOU SURE THAT IN THE HEAT OF BATTLE YOU SAW CLEARLY? THEY CAME OUT OF THE VESSEL?
YES, SHERIFF. I'M SURE OF IT.
YOU TRUST YOUR EYES, BUT I'M NOT SO SURE I CAN TRUST *MINE...*
SOMETHING IS *WRONG* HERE, AND WE MUST LOOK *CLOSER.*

ONCE I HAD ANOTHER EYE, BUT IT WAS LOST SOME TIME AGO. GOD DOOM SAW FIT TO GIVE ME A BETTER ONE. ALL-SEEING...
...AND WHAT I SEE HERE IS NOT OF THIS TIME. NOT OF THIS WORLD.
AND NOW I ALSO SEE...
...WE ARE NOT ALONE.
HOW MANY OF THEM WERE THERE?
I'M SORRY, BUT I CANNOT SAY FOR SURE. MORE THAN A FEW...MORE THAN ENOUGH.
WE'VE COMPLETED OUR SEARCH OF THE IMMEDIATE AREA, SHERIFF.
SIX, MAYBE SEVEN, TRACKS LEADING SOUTH AWAY FROM THE VESSEL.
HOW FAR COULD THEY HAVE GOTTEN?
ACCORDING TO OUR YOUNG THOR HERE, THIS COWARDLY ATTACK HAPPENED LESS THAN TWO HOURS AGO. OUR BROTHER WHO FELL WAS MIGHTY, SO ASSUME THEY ARE FAST. ASSUME THEY ARE STRONG.
IF THEY WALKED OR RAN, ONE HUNDRED LEAGUES. IF THEY COULD FLY...FOUR TIMES THAT.
CALL IT FIVE HUNDRED THEN. IT COULD BE A FEINT... TAKE EVERYONE AND COVER THE FIRST FIFTY LEAGUES.
IF YOU DO NOT COME ACROSS THEM, SPLIT YOUR FORCE AND SEND HALF BY GLYPH FIVE HUNDRED LEAGUES OUT. THEN WORK TOWARDS ONE ANOTHER.
I KNOW YOU ARE ANGRY--I AM ANGRY--BUT BRING ME SOMEONE ALIVE...

...GOD WILL HAVE QUESTIONS.
ARE YOU READY?
I...I DON'T KNOW. IT'S MY FIRST DAY, IT WASN'T SUPPOSED TO BE LIKE THIS.
ONCE, *EVERY* DAY WAS DARK LIKE THIS. BRINGING ORDER TO A THING TAKES GREAT EFFORT AND HAS A HIGH COST.
AT THE SHIELD, THERE ARE SCORES OF THESE: YOUR BROTHERS BEFORE YOU WHO PAID WITH THEIR LIVES SO THAT WE ALL MIGHT INHERIT A BETTER WORLD.
WE WILL ALL FALL ONE DAY...
...BUT FOR YOU, EVEN IN DEATH, YOU ARE A SENTINEL.
REST WELL, LOYAL SON. YOU HAVE EARNED IT.
AS FOR OUR HIDDEN FRIEND... YOU CAN COME OUT NOW...
WE ARE ALONE.

LET'S GO.
DON'T MAKE ME COME IN THERE.
Okay.
You got me.
But, uh, I come in peace. Okay?
Look, I have no idea what happened or what's going on, but the last thing I remember was sneaking on--
YOU'VE BEEN ABOARD THE VESSEL THIS ENTIRE TIME?
Yeah. And like I said, I don't--
WHO WERE THE OTHERS ON YOUR SHIP?
It wasn't my ship, and I have no idea who those guys are. All I know is I snuck in trying to figure out what these guys--bad guys, because who else *dresses* that way--were doing in that giant dome...
Because, like, another *world* had appeared in the sky, and the dome opened, and--
WAIT. A WORLD IN THE SKY...
ARE YOU TELLING ME...YOU ***REMEMBER?***



THE DISQUIET HEART OF GOD

CASTLE DOOM.
DID YOU KNOW THERE ARE TALES OF OLD--LONG-FORGOTTEN MYTHS--OF MORTALS BUILDING GREAT *TOWERS* SO THEY COULD BE CLOSER TO GOD?
THE STAIRS ARE UNNECESSARY, SUSAN, I WOULD MEET YOU WHEREVER YOU CHOOSE.
HMM.
IT'S THE STRANGEST THING. I WAS WALKING IN THE GREAT SQUARE TODAY--
ALONE, I ASSUME? THE GOOD SHERIFF STRANGE WILL HAVE SOMETHING TO SAY ABOUT YOU, ONCE AGAIN, LEAVING YOUR ROYAL ESCORT BEHIND.
THE SHERIFF IS A BLEATING OLD BORE. HE SHOULD CONCERN HIMSELF WITH THE KINGDOMS... OR YOU.
BUT CERTAINLY NOT ME...
...AS I AM NOT SEEN IF I DON'T WANT TO BE SEEN--AND ON THE CHANCE THAT I AM, I'M MORE THAN CAPABLE OF HANDLING MYSELF.
OF COURSE. FORGIVE ME.
YOU WERE SAYING SOMETHING ABOUT THE SQUARE?
THE RETINUES OF THE UPPER AND LOWER KINGDOMS WERE LEAVING DOOMSTADT THIS MORNING, AND THEY WERE SINGING A SONG ABOUT *THE MAN IN THE SUN.*
DO YOU KNOW ABOUT THIS?

I HAVE NOT HEARD IT SUNG, BUT I AM AWARE OF IT.
IS THAT WHAT YOU ARE UP HERE THINKING ABOUT?
IF YOU KNEW, THEN WHY HAVEN'T YOU DISCOURAGED IT?
BECAUSE I HAD HOPED YOU WOULD HEAR IT... AND BE *PLEASED.*
...
I MISS HIM, VICTOR.
I KNOW...
"STILL, YOUR BROTHER DEFIED US...
"I WOULD HAVE STRUCK JONATHAN DOWN WHERE HE STOOD, OR WORSE, SENT HIM BEYOND THE SHIELD, BUT I LEFT HIS PUNISHMENT UP TO YOU, SUSAN.
"YOU...*YOU* CHOSE TO LIFT HIM UP AND BRING LIGHT TO WHAT WAS A TOO DARK, SELF-ILLUMINATED WORLD.
"SO NOW HE IS *THE SUN.*"
I KNOW I WASN'T WRONG. HE WAS A DISSIDENT...A *REBEL.* AND I KNOW THAT, IF HE COULD, HE WOULD HAVE PULLED ME DOWN ALONG WITH YOU...
...BUT STILL I LOVED HIM... AND WANTED TO SOMEHOW *HONOR* HIM.
HONOR? YOU SHOULD HAVE LISTENED MORE CLOSELY TO THE SONG.
THEY'RE QUITE SERIOUS. DID YOU KNOW THERE ARE EVEN THOSE WHO *WORSHIP* HIM NOW IN THE UPPER AND LOWER KINGDOMS?

IT IS NO SMALL THING TO BE WORSHIPPED, SUSAN.
THERE WAS A TIME, BEFORE ALL THAT FUSS, WHEN SOME BELIEVED THE REASON OUR WORLD HAD NO SUN WAS BECAUSE YOU WERE OFFENDED AT THE IDEA OF SOMETHING SHINING BRIGHTER THAN YOU IN THE SKY.
THE IDEA *IS* OFFENSIVE.
OH?
BUT TRUE. AND TRUTH IS ALWAYS THE SHARPEST BLADE. IT ALWAYS CUTS THE DEEPEST.
EARLIER, STEPHEN MENTIONED THAT I SEEMED TROUBLED. HE WAS RIGHT. BUT THE STRONG MAN CAN SHOW VERY FEW HIS WOUNDS--DOOM CAN SHOW ONLY ***ONE...***
LOOK AT ME, SUSAN. I HAVE ***CHANGED.***
I KNOW.
AND YOU'VE CHANGED FOR THE ***BETTER.***
I HAVE TOLD YOU MY SECRETS. YOU KNOW I WAS NOT ALWAYS A GOD.
I BELIEVED IN THE... ***RIGHTNESS*** OF ME. GIVEN MY GIFT TO SHAPE ALL OF REALITY, I WOULD MAKE SOMETHING BETTER THAN THE SHAPERS OF OLD.
AND YET LOOK AT WHAT IT ACTUALLY *IS...*
WE ALL MAKE MISTAKES.
YOU MISUNDERSTAND...
THERE IS NO FLAW IN THE WORLD--IT IS THE WORLD I WANTED. BUT MY PEOPLE ARE RESTLESS BECAUSE I FAIL TO PROPERLY INSPIRE THEM.
I AM A POOR GOD. I THINK NOW THAT ONCE HAVING MADE THE WORLD, I SHOULD HAVE REMOVED MYSELF. PERHAPS THE GODS OF OLD HAD IT RIGHT...
...IT IS BETTER TO BE UNSEEN--DEMANDING FAITH, AND BEYOND BEING DEFINED BY THE MUNDANE.
I'M BEGINNING TO THINK THAT IN MY PERFECT WORLD... ***I*** AM THE ONE FLAWED THING.
WELL, I DISAGREE.

AND YET...I *AM* FLAWED.
ALL THIS POWER AND STILL I CANNOT HEAL MY FACE.
YOUR FACE...
OH, VICTOR...I REMEMBER WHEN WE FOUND EACH OTHER. I REMEMBER ME... CHOOSING YOU...
NOT BECAUSE OF HOW YOU LOOKED, BUT BECAUSE OF YOUR MIND AND YOUR HEART. AND THEN TO FIND OUT WHAT YOU HAD DONE TO SAVE US ALL...
I KNOW YOU BETTER THAN ANYONE, AND YOU COULDN'T BE MORE WRONG.
YOU SHOULDN'T *REMOVE* YOURSELF--YOU SHOULD *MEET* THE PEOPLE IN THE STREETS. THEY UNDERSTAND YOUR PERCEIVED POWER, SHOW THEM YOUR *REAL* STRENGTH.
TAKE OFF YOUR *MASK,* VICTOR.
SO THEY CAN SEE *THIS?*
SO THEY CAN SEE WHAT I SEE...
...A GOD WITH *GREAT LOVE* FOR HIS PEOPLE.

GOD DOOM LOVES ALL MEN BUT ONE

THE HIDDEN ISLE OF AGAMOTTO.
WHERE ARE WE?
MY SANCTUM SANCTORUM. A SAFE HAVEN FROM THIS WORLD AND ITS PRYING EYES... AND A PLACE OF REMEMBRANCE OF ALL THAT HAS BEEN LOST.
POOFF
GOD DOOM HAS MADE A WORLD OF MANY WONDERS. I HAVE SEEN MIRRORS OF THOSE I HAVE KNOWN--LIVES LIVED DIFFERENTLY, OR EVEN STRANGER...THE UNRECOGNIZABLELY SIMILAR.
FOR INSTANCE, MUCH OF WHAT WAS A PLACE CALLED WAKANDA CAN BE FOUND IN THE UPPER KINGDOM, BOTH IN DESIGN AND FUNCTION...
WHEN I SAW THE VESSEL YOU FOUND, I WAS NOT SURPRISED...
BUT TO FIND THAT IT HELD REFUGEES FROM THE TIME BEFORE...
...WELL, THAT REQUIRES FULL UNDERSTANDING.
Oh, man... You've got another one.

YES, I DO. YOUNG THOR... IF YOU WOULD, TRY TO OPEN THIS VESSEL IN THE SAME MANNER AS THE LAST.
AND WITH GREAT CARE, PLEASE.
I CAN TRY. THE MOLOID THAT WAS...AH... I THINK I'VE GOT--
SO...
ARE WE THERE YET?
BECAUSE, I SWEAR, IT DOESN'T LOOK LIKE WE'RE THERE YET.

HEY!
Peter, is that you?
MILES?
Yeah.
NO WAY.
WHAT'RE... I MEAN, *HOW* ARE YOU... HERE?
FOR THAT MATTER... HOW ARE *ANY* OF US HERE?
LAST THING I REMEMBER, THE WORLD WAS ENDING... AND *YOU'RE* HERE, DOCTOR STRANGE...
...A MAN WHO DISAPPEARED MONTHS AGO. WHAT'S GOING ON, STEPHEN?
THAT DEPENDS ON YOUR ANSWER TO THE QUESTION OF WORLDS. ARE YOU REALLY *MY* CAPTAIN MARVEL? OR SOME OTHER UNIVERSE'S VERSION OF THE CAROL I ONCE KNEW?
BETTER PUT, AM I REALLY WHO YOU THINK I AM? ARE YOU REALLY *YOU?*
WELL, YOU SOUND LIKE AN IDIOT... WHICH SEEMS FAMILIAR ENOUGH.
EVEN IF THAT *WERE* TRUE...
ARE YOU REALLY THE ONLY ONES WHO SURVIVED?
NO. THERE ARE A FEW MORE OF US...
OH!

CYCLOPS... YOU'VE BECOME *THE PHOENIX.*
THE DREAM IS IMMORTAL, DOCTOR...SOME OF US WERE MADE FOR **RESURRECTION...**
BUT SOME OF US... MADE IT THROUGH BETTER THAN OTHERS.
UNBELIEVABLE.
IS THAT REALLY YOU, STEPHEN?
MEMENTO MORI?
ILLUMINATUS.
MY GOD, MAN. IT'S GOOD TO SEE YOU.
HOW DID YOU SURVIVE THE COLLAPSE? HOW ARE YOU HERE?
WHERE ARE--
IT'S QUITE A STORY. A LONG ONE...
...BUT YOU, YOU BUILT THIS CRAFT TO SURVIVE THE END OF EVERYTHING... AMAZING.
THERE WERE DEFECTS, WEAKNESSES...WE LOST PEOPLE. REED, HE...
WE LOST PEOPLE.
ONE SECOND MORE... AND MAYBE I COULD HAVE SAVED THEM...
MINUTES AGO THEY WERE RIGHT HERE, AND NOW I CAN'T EVEN TELL THEM HOW MUCH I--
OH, GOD...

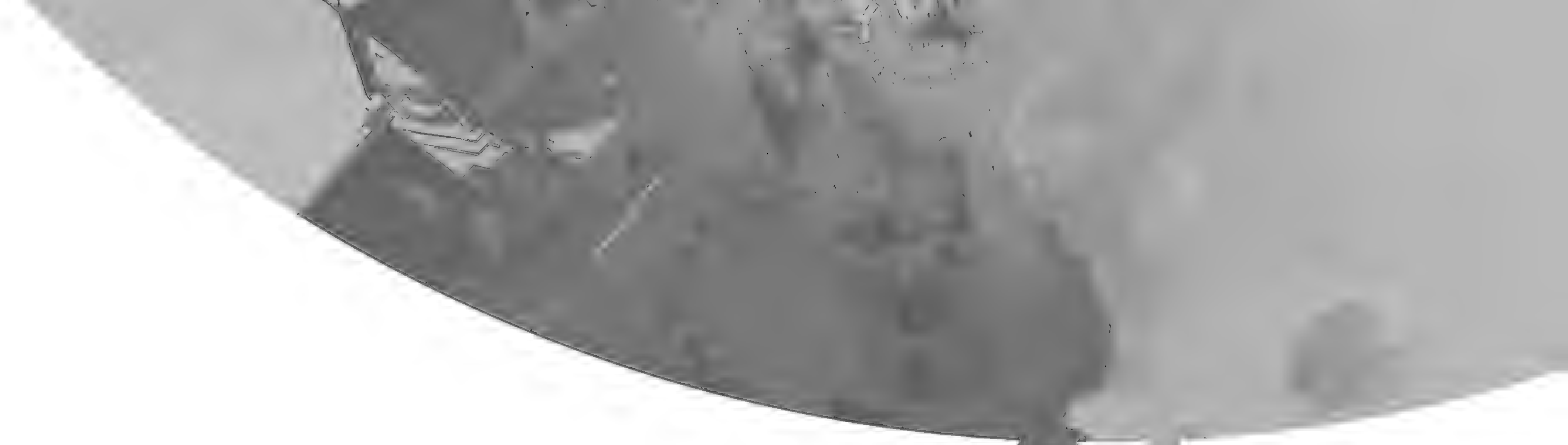
WHERE EXACTLY ARE WE?
I HAVE TO WARN YOU. THIS SITUATION WE ARE IN...IT'S MORE COMPLICATED THAN YOU MIGHT THINK.
IT'S NOT JUST THE *"WHERE"* THAT SHOULD CONCERN YOU, BUT ALSO THE *"WHEN."*
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
YOU'VE BEEN IN STASIS... GONE QUITE SOME TIME...
WELL, I THINK AN ***HOUR'S*** A LONG TIME. I GET BORED.
HOW LONG ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
EIGHT YEARS.
EVERYTHING DIED, BUT IN THAT MOMENT OF DEATH, GOD MADE A NEW WORLD... THIS ONE.
HE CONSTRUCTED IT OUT OF THE REMNANTS OF INCURSION POINTS BETWEEN COLLAPSING WORLDS. SOME OF WHAT WE WOULD CALL ***OUR EARTH*** REMAINS...MOST DOES NOT.
YOU SHOULD KNOW, HOWEVER, THAT NO ONE REMEMBERS THE WORLDS BEFORE. ONLY THIS ONE.
HOW IS THAT POSSIBLE?
IT'S QUITE SIMPLE, ACTUALLY. EXACTLY HOW WELL DO ***YOU*** REMEMBER EIGHT YEARS AGO? MOST OF IT IS PARTIAL RECOLLECTIONS AMID MOMENTS OF CLARITY.
AT FIRST--AS THE WORLD WAS SHAPED--IT TOOK CONSTANT EFFORT TO SYNCHRONIZE THE NEW HISTORY WITH THE OLD, BUT NOW IT'S MUCH EASIER.
ESPECIALLY SINCE GOD CONTROLS THE AREAS OF STUDY IN THE MINISTRIES OF SCIENCE.
WHO IS IT?
EXCUSE ME?
GOD. WHO IS THIS GOD YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT?

DOOM.
IT'S DOOM, REED. VICTOR SAVED US ALL.
STEPHEN...
...HOW LONG AGO DID YOU FIND OUR RAFT?
...
THREE YEARS AGO.
I SUPPOSE I KNEW THERE WAS SOMETHING INSIDE OF GREAT CONSEQUENCE... BUT I HAD TO WEIGH THAT AGAINST OTHER THINGS.
VICTOR VON DOOM IS A GOD AND RULES OVER EVERYTHING IN THIS WORLD, AND YET YOU HAD TO WEIGH THAT AGAINST OTHER CONSIDERATIONS?
WHAT IN THE WORLD COULD MATTER SO MUCH THAT YOU LEFT US HERE, BURIED ALIVE, STEPHEN? EXPLAIN IT TO ME.
IT'S EASY TO EXPLAIN, REED...
...HE IS VERY, VERY GOOD AT PLAYING GOD.

THE KINGDOM OF UTOPOLIS.
DID YOU NOTICE THE SUN TODAY?
IT'S MADNESS-- MY FAVORITE KIND-- BUT I SWEAR, THE SUN IS ORBITING THIS PLANET AND NOT THE OTHER WAY AROUND. FASCINATING.
TO SAY IT IS A STRANGE LAND IS AN UNDERSTATEMENT, MAXIMUS, BUT FASCINATING? HARDLY.
WE COVERED GOOD GROUND TODAY, BUT THIS WASTELAND SEEMS UNENDING. A BARREN NOTHINGNESS.
TOMORROW WE SHOULD SPLIT UP. HEAD IN DIFFERENT DIRECTIONS.

We should have done things differently back at the raft.
The yellow peasant class seemed useless, but that Thor...
...he had an aged look. We should have questioned him--I bet he knew things.
I AGREE.
WE SHOULD HAVE KEPT HIM ALIVE.
THERE IS NO NEED FOR MERCY.
NO NEED TO REGRET WHAT WAS LOST.
OH. REALLY?
BECAUSE YOU THINK IF WE JUST MUDDLE ALONG WE'LL SOMEHOW EVENTUALLY FIND THE ANSWERS TO OUR QUESTIONS?
NO.
THE ***ANSWERS*** WILL FIND ***US.***
I KNOW IT.
AND HOW IS THAT, THANOS?
BECAUSE...

...I AM LOOKING UP.



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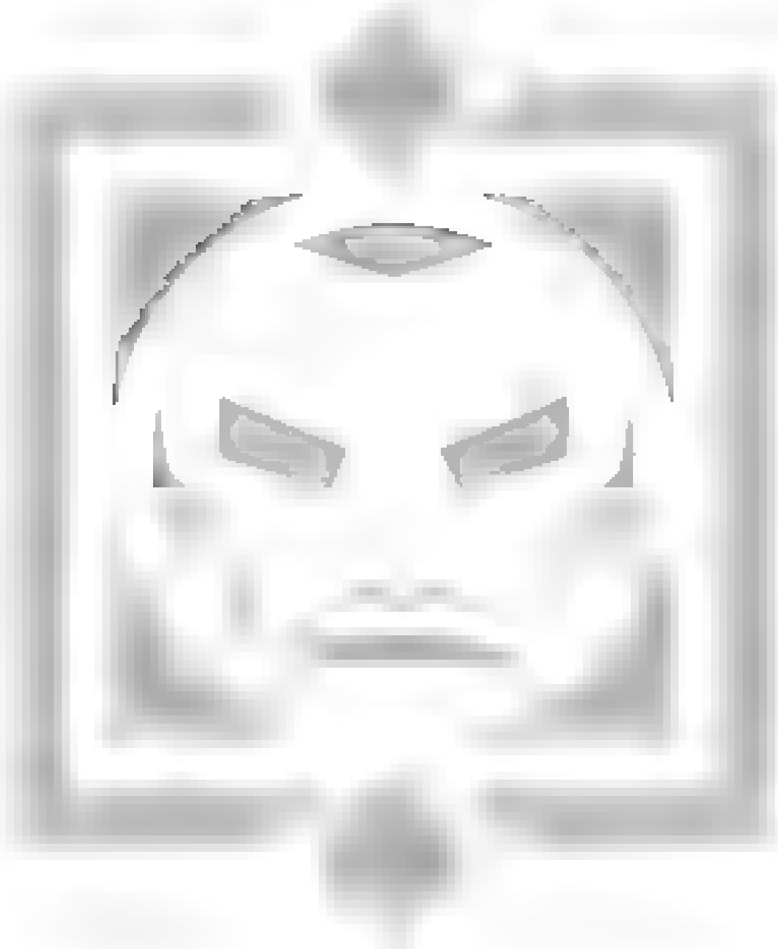
ALL THE ANGELS SING, ALL THE DEVILS DANCE



THE SECOND OFFENSE

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"HERE'S THE THING YOU NEED TO UNDERSTAND ABOUT HOW THIS WORLD IS DIFFERENT FROM THE OLD ONE...

"THE EARTH THAT WAS...THE UNIVERSE THAT WAS...
"THE *MULTIVERSE* THAT WAS...
"THESE WERE ALL FORMED BY SOME HIGHER ORDER--SOME ALIEN, ETHEREAL OTHER THING THAT PERFECTLY CONSTRUCTED NOT JUST THE MATERIAL NATURE OF EVERYTHING, BUT THE RULES THAT GOVERNED IT AS WELL.
"BUT THIS WORLD? THE NEW WORLD?
"IT WAS FORMED FROM THE SHATTERED REMNANTS OF BROKEN EARTHS--I KNOW, FOR I WATCHED DOOM WILL THEM INTO SINGULARITY.
"IF THERE'S ONE THING YOU HEAR, LET IT BE THIS: THE NEW WORLD IS UNNATURAL. AND SURVIVAL IS ITS FIRST AND HIGHEST PURPOSE."

THE HIDDEN ISLE OF AGAMOTTO. SANCTUM OF SHERIFF STRANGE.
AS SUCH, IT IS A PLACE OF TESTING-- OF CONSTANT CONFLICT-- AND IT NEEDS A GOD WITH A FIRM HAND.
THUS, BATTLEWORLD.
THUS... *DOOM.*
LONG MAY HE WEAR HIS CROWN.
OKAY. WHEN YOU TALK LIKE THAT... YOU DO KNOW YOU SOUND *INSANE*, RIGHT?
EXACTLY. THE ONLY THING MORE INSANE IS THAT CAPE YOU'RE WEARING AND, LET ME TELL YOU, IT'S FANTASTIC.
I HAVE TO HAVE ONE.
HOW, STEPHEN...
HOW DID IT HAPPEN?

DO YOU REMEMBER WHEN OUR SECRET BROTHERHOOD COULDN'T UNDERSTAND WHY THE EARLY DEATH OF EVERYTHING WAS HAPPENING?
WORLDS--UNIVERSES--CRASHING TOGETHER... YOU BELIEVED THAT THERE WAS SOMEONE--OR SOMETHING--BEHIND IT.
WELL, YOU WERE RIGHT.
"THERE *WAS* SOMETHING BEHIND IT."
UNFORTUNATELY, NO ONE COULD STOP THE PERFECT ANNIHILATION PLAN THAT THE BEYONDERS HAD PUT IN MOTION...
...BUT WE COULD STOP *THEM.* SO WE DID.
HOW?
"WE KILLED THEM AND TOOK THEIR POWER FOR OURSELVES."
I LOOKED INTO THE ABYSS THAT WAS OMNIPOTENCE AND RAN FROM IT.
DOOM DID NOT.
THEN HE SAVED ALL THAT THERE WAS LEFT TO SAVE.

AND NOW YOU *SERVE* HIM.
NOW... HE IS *GOD.*
DOUBT HIM IF YOU WANT. DEFY HIM. CURSE HIS VERY EXISTENCE...
IT DOESN'T MATTER. *HE REIGNS.*
So...it's all gone? My world?
My friends and family?
NOT ALL OF IT.
SOME SMALL BITS REMAIN. SOME OF YOUR NEW YORK.
A SMALL PORTION OF WAKANDA.
IS THAT ENOUGH? IS IT ENOUGH TO REMIND US OF WHO WE WERE IN THE FACE OF WHERE WE ARE NOW?
THERE ARE TIMES WHEN THIS WORLD FALLS FAR SHORT OF WHAT I HOPED IT WOULD BE. BUT IT IS REAL--IT EXISTS--AND THAT COUNTS FOR SOMETHING.
THEN I HAVE TO ASK, SORCERER...

...BECAUSE I'VE HAD A RECENT REVOLUTION IN PERSONAL IDEOLOGY.
IF YOU HAD THE POWER...IF YOU HAD THE MEANS... IF YOU WERE THE ONE PLAYING GOD AND THE WORLD YOU WANT IS NOT THE ONE YOU HAVE...
DON'T YOU HAVE THE RESPONSIBILITY TO BURN IT DOWN AND RAISE UP SOMETHING BETTER?
ISN'T THAT THE REAL BURDEN THAT COMES WITH THE KIND OF POWER DOOM HAS? ISN'T IT THE BURDEN OF POWER I HAVE?
THAT'S SOMETHING I WOULD NEVE--
EXCUSE ME, SHERIFF. I'M SORRY TO INTERRUPT, BUT I AM NEWLY RAISED AND DO NOT KNOW THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS...
WHAT DOES IT MEAN?
OUR ATTENTION IS NEEDED ELSEWHERE.

TAKE HEART, BROTHERS AND SISTERS--I HAVE SOUNDED THE ALARM, AND SUMMONED THE HOST!
THOOOOOOOO...
THE KINGDOM OF UTOPOLIS.
THIS WILL NOT WAIT, BROTHER! THE BATTLE GOES POORLY.
TWO OF OUR NUMBER ARE BADLY INJURED. WE CANNOT HOLD QUARANTINE, AND IF THESE ROGUES SCATTER, SOME WILL SURELY ESCAPE TO OTHER KINGDOMS BEFORE REINFORCEMENTS ARRIVE.
LAWLESSNESS IS A DISEASE. AN INFECTIOUS WOUND WE CANNOT LET ROT THE WORLD.
I MUST TAKE THIS MATTER TO GOD.
VIOLENCE. VIOLENCE. HOW THE SIMPLE LOVE THEIR VIOLENCE. IT'S SO PREDICTABLE--MOST THINGS ARE. WHICH IS WHY I DO SO LOVE SURPRISES...
LOOK THERE, MAKER. WHAT IS THAT CURIOUS MAN UP TO? SURRENDER? PACIFISM?
Something a bit more foreboding, Maximus...
"...I believe he is *praying*."

CASTLE DOOM.
ALL-FATHER. I BESEECH YOU, HEAR MY PRAYER.
A SUPPLICANT? WHAT IS THIS?
I THINK I KNOW. EARLIER TODAY I INFORMED THE SHERIFF THAT MY SCIENCE TEAM HAD FOUND SOMETHING POTENTIALLY HERETICAL IN THE KINGDOM OF UTOPOLIS. HE SENT YOUR LAWMEN TO INVESTIGATE.
I'M GUESSING THINGS AREN'T GOING TOO WELL, FATHER.
VERY WELL, THOR. CONTINUE.
THERE IS CHAOS IN YOUR KINGDOMS AND WE NEED YOUR GUIDING HAND, ALL-FATHER.
I HAVE NO DOUBT WE CAN PREVAIL--REGARDLESS OF THE COST--BUT THERE IS SOMETHING UNNATURAL AT WORK HERE, AND YOU NEEDED TO KNOW.
PERHAPS.
BUT MOST MEN CANNOT TELL FOOLISHNESS FROM FORESIGHT...
SO I JUDGE THINGS WITH MY OWN EYES...

...OR THE ONES I HAVE AVAILABLE TO ME.
SHOW ME WHAT YOU SEE, THOR.
SHOW ME THIS CHAOS.

VALERIA?
FIRST THOUGHTS? THE THOR IS RIGHT. THE OUTCOME IS DIFFICULT TO PREDICT. I MEAN, WE'VE SEEN THIS BEFORE. I'M SHOWING RECORDED OCCURRENCES OF MULTIPLE TITANS OF THIS DESIGNATION.
BUT IT'S WORTH NOTING THAT NONE OF THOSE EXTRAPOLATE OUT TO THE ENERGY LEVELS THIS ONE IS GIVING OFF.
WHAT DO YOU SEE, FATHER?
MORTALS FIGHTING MORTALS. IRRITANTS THAT DO NOT RISE TO THE LEVEL OF MY CONSIDERATION...
I SEE GNATS THAT DO NOT CONCERN ME.
I THINK YOU MIGHT BE UNDERESTIMATING WHAT WE'RE LOOKING AT HERE, VICTOR.
EVEN MY FORCE-FIELDS COULD NOT WITHSTAND THE REPEATED HAMMERING OF A MJOLNIR. PERHAPS YOU SHOULD RECONSIDER INTERVENING?
THAT WON'T BE NECESSARY, SUSAN.
LOOK...
STEPHEN HAS ARRIVED.

AN UPDATED PROJECTION, VALERIA?
MORE FAVORABLE, OF COURSE. BUT ACTUALLY LESS PREDICTABLE...
LIKE I SAID BEFORE, WE HAVE ANALOGS OF MANY OF THE THINGS I'M SEEING, BUT THERE ARE SLIGHT--OR IN SOME CASES, RATHER LARGE--DIFFERENCES...
CALL THEM *VARIABLES.*
SEE THE SAME VARIABLE ENOUGH TIMES AND IT BECOMES A *CONSTANT.*
ALL OF WHICH SENDS ME LEAPING TO SOME PRETTY DRAMATIC CONCLUSIONS. I THINK I MIGHT WANT TO TAKE A MUCH HARDER LOOK AT ALL THIS.
I MUST CONFESS... THERE IS SOMETHING DISQUIETING AND FAMILIAR ABOUT ALL OF THIS.
VICTOR, LOOK HERE...

I DON'T KNOW WHAT IT IS ABOUT THIS ONE, MY LOVE...
BUT THERE'S SOMETHING DIFFERENT ABOUT HIM. SOMETHING... *SPECIAL.*
YES.
INDEED THERE IS. I SPENT YEARS LOOKING IN EVERY CORNER OF EVERY KINGDOM FOR SOME VERSION OF YOU...
AND NOW HERE YOU ARE. BROUGHT BEFORE ME.
HAS SOMETHING CAUGHT YOUR EYE, MY LOVE?
SUSAN, SUMMON THE SURGEONS. TELL THEM TO PREPARE FOR WOUNDED.
YES, MY QUEEN. IT STIRS ME TO ACTION.
BUT FEAR NOT...
I WILL RETURN SHORTLY.
WHOUUMMFFF

RICHARDS.
Is he talking to me? I don't really care for his tone.
NO.
HE IS MOST CERTAINLY *NOT* TALKING TO YOU.
SO, IT'S TRUE. IT REALLY IS YOU, ISN'T IT, VICTOR?
IT'S AMAZING. AN ARTIFICIAL CONSTRUCT OF REALITY. A WORLD WHERE THERE SHOULD BE *NOTHING.*
LOOK AT WHAT YOU'VE *MADE.*

YES. I DID WHAT YOU AND ALL OF YOUR ILK COULD NOT.
I SAVED THE UNSAVABLE IN THE FACE OF *TOTAL ANNIHILATION.*
I AM A MIRACLE WORKER. BUT HERE *YOU* ARE, SO YOU MUST BE AS WELL.
WE BUILT A SHIP. ALL WE SAVED WAS OURSELVES.
I CAN'T HELP BUT NOTICE YOU DECIDED TO PUT YOURSELF ON A THRONE.
YEAH. WE'RE ALL ABSOLUTELY SHOCKED BY THAT. JUST FLOORED.
A THRONE?
I'VE HAD A THRONE FOR QUITE SOME TIME. A THRONE WAS MY BIRTHRIGHT. I'VE PLACED MYSELF A GOOD BIT HIGHER THAN THAT.
HAVE YOU? I HAVE MY DOUBTS.
IF ONE PLAYS AT BEING A GOD, ONE WOULD NOT SHY AWAY FROM SAYING IT.
I AM GOD.

I UNDERSTAND THIS MUST BE CONFUSING FOR ALL OF YOU, BUT TAKE HEART, FOR WHILE I AM MIGHTY, I AM ALSO MERCIFUL.
I WILL GIVE YOU A MOMENT TO... **READJUST** YOUR OLD WAYS OF THINKING. THEN YOU WILL BEND YOUR KNEE AND BOW YOUR HEAD AT MY FEET.
BELIEVE IN ME...FOR THIS WORLD IS ***MINE.***
I DO NOT NEED A MOMENT. AND I DO NOT NEED YOUR MERCY.
FOR HOLDING A THING--SHAPING A THING--DOES NOT MAKE IT YOURS FOREVER...
THINGS CHANGE...
THEY EVOLVE...

THE FUTURE CANNOT BE DENIED.
HHRRRGHHHHH
IN THE END, YOU'RE JUST LIKE EVERY OTHER MAN. FOR A TIME, PLAYING AT SOMETHING GREATER THAN WHAT YOU ARE...
AND I?
I AM MUTANT--MORE THAN MAN...
HHHHRAARRGH
I AM THE FUTURE HERE IN THE PRESENT.
AND ALL WORLDS--EVEN YOURS--BELONG TO US...
THIS PLANET IS OURS...
THIS PLANET IS MIN--

HURK!
MY EYES HAVE SEEN THINGS OVER THE YEARS, T'CHALLA...
I HAVE HIDDEN MANY OF THEM.
WHAT ARE YOU DOING, STEPHEN?
THE FUTURE?
THAT FUTURE YOU SPEAK OF IS A *DREAM*, BOY.
AND THE DREAM...
REMEMBER THIS.

CRACK
...THE DREAM IS OVER.
THUMP
WHERE DID YOU SEND THEM, STEPHEN?
I SCATTERED THEM TO THE WIND.
WHY?
BECAUSE WE BOTH KNOW WHAT WAS ABOUT TO HAPPEN.
THEY WOULD HAVE REFUSED TO BOW BEFORE YOU, AND THEN YOU WOULD HAVE FELT COMPELLED TO ELIMINATE SUCH BEHAVIOR. WITH PREJUDICE.
I COULDN'T ALLOW THAT.

YOU THINK THAT'S AN INDULGENCE, BUT YOU KNOW WHAT THEY ARE GOING TO TRY TO DO.
THEY WON'T BE ABLE TO HELP THEMSELVES. IT'S THEIR NATURE.
IT'S *HIS.*
MAYBE IT'S MINE AS WELL.
THOSE ARE PEOPLE WE REALLY KNOW, ***FROM THE OLD WORLD,*** AND I HAVE LIVED A LIFETIME WITH SOME OF THEM. WE DID GREAT THINGS TOGETHER.
AND HAVE YOU AND *I* NOT DONE GREAT THINGS TOGETHER, OLD FRIEND?
OF COURSE WE HAVE...
...BUT I WON'T HAVE ANYTHING TO DO WITH THIS.
CALL THEM BACK.
NO.
...
YOU WILL NOT TEST ME, STEPHEN.
I DIDN'T EVEN TELL HIM WHAT YOU'VE DONE, AND I'M SURE HE'S GOING TO BE HARD AT WORK SOLVING THE PROBLEM OF YOU.
HOW MUCH HARDER DO YOU THINK REED RICHARDS IS GOING TO TRY WHEN HE FINDS OUT THAT YOU STOLE HIS ENTIRE *LIFE?* LOOK AT YOU...
EVEN WITH ALL THIS POWER, YOU'RE STILL AFRAID OF HIM.
WELL, YOU KNOW WHAT, OLD FRIEND?
I THINK YOU SHOULD BE.

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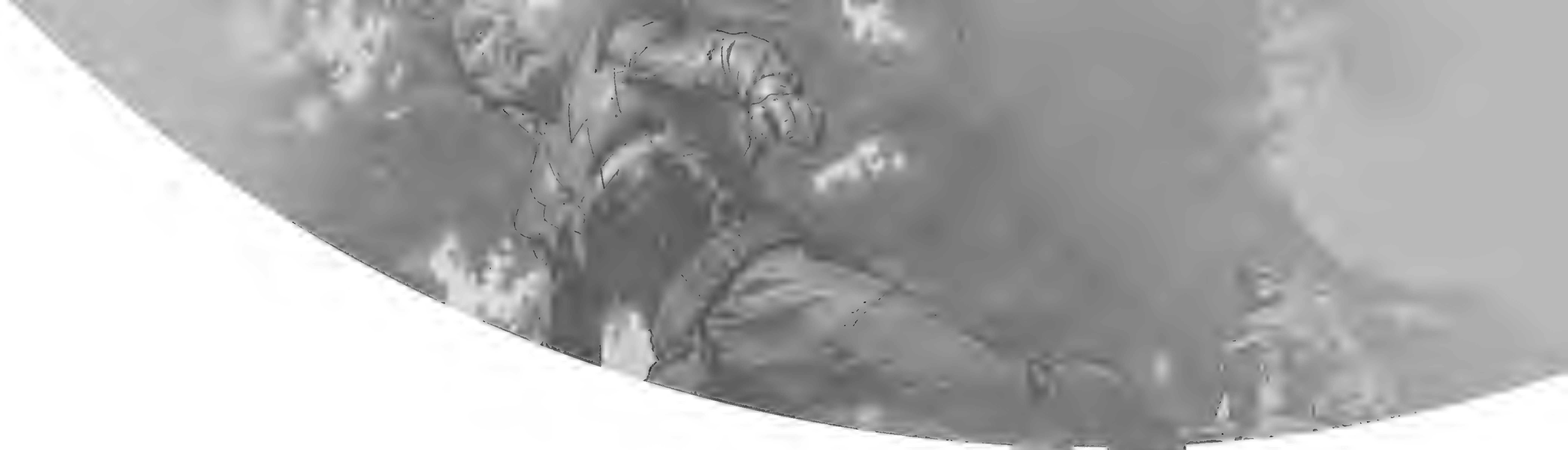

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OWEN REECE DIED FOR OUR SINS

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BEFORE THE WORLD, THERE WAS THE ETHER...
WE CANNOT CALL IT *HEAVEN*, OR *FOREVER*, OR ANY OTHER JOYFUL THING...
...FOR IT WAS *NOTHING.* AND IN THIS OCEAN OF ABSENCE, THERE WAS ONLY GOD DOOM AND HIS FIRST DISCIPLE: OUR FALLEN LEADER, *STEPHEN STRANGE.*
THINK ON IT, BROTHERS AND SISTERS:
THERE WAS NOTHING. AND THEN...THERE WAS *EVERYTHING.*
AND THE ONLY WITNESS TO THE MIRACLE OF CREATION BESIDES THE ALL-FATHER HIMSELF WAS THE GOOD SHERIFF STRANGE.

WHAT AN HONOR. WHAT A LIFE.
IF VALHALLA IS FOR THE BRAVE, STEPHEN...
...THEN THERE YOU WILL BE A KING.
OF ALL OF US, YOU WERE TRULY THE MOST WORTHY.
WHAT THE HEL IS GOING ON HERE?
SHH. WE'LL SPEAK LATER.

THERE IS GOING TO BE A PUBLIC MEMORIAL LATER WHERE ALL THE VARIOUS KINGDOM BARONS AND CITIZENS OF DOOMGARD CAN PAY THEIR RESPECTS...
...BUT HE WAS YOUR FRIEND, VICTOR. AND I THOUGHT YOU WOULD APPRECIATE SOMETHING MORE... *PERSONAL.*
OF COURSE.
THANK YOU, SUSAN.
FRANKLIN, WOULD YOU PLEASE...
OKAY.
I'M SORRY YOU DIED, MISTER STRANGE.
I LIKED YOU A LOT.
WHEN WE FIND OUT WHO DID THIS, I'M GONNA MASH THEM INTO LITTLE PIECES.
"JUST YOU WATCH."

YOU KNOW, HE AND I DIDN'T ALWAYS SEE EYE TO EYE...
...BUT THERE'S NO ARGUING WHETHER OR NOT THE SHERIFF WAS A GREAT MAN. HE WAS CERTAINLY THAT.
I'M SORRY, DAD.
WE LIVE OUR LIVES DEFINED BY THE CHOICES WE MAKE. AND IN THE END, THE HIGH COST OF LIVING IS DEATH.
WE ALL DESERVE BETTER.
WELL, I'M THE REASON HE WAS OUT THERE. MY TEAM FOUND THE VESSEL AND HE QUARANTINED IT.
SO MAYBE THIS IS ALL MY FAULT AND I SHOULD BE SMART ENOUGH TO JUST KEEP MY HEAD DOWN, BUT YOU KNOW ME...I HAVE TO ASK...WHY ARE YOU NOW TASKING MY OFFICE WITH TRACKING DOWN THE PEOPLE WHO DID THIS?
MORE THAN THAT, DAD, WHY AREN'T THEY *DEAD?*
I MEAN, REALLY, WHO ESCAPES THE JUDGMENT OF GOD IN A SITUATION LIKE THIS?
NO ONE HAS ESCAPED ANYTHING, VALERIA.

BUT IT IS UNWISE FOR ME TO PURSUE THEM AT THIS TIME. I'M UPSET. AND IN SUCH A STATE...I JUST MIGHT BREAK THE WORLD.
SO YOU WILL FIND THEM, AND THEN I WILL SHOW YOU WHAT *REAL* JUDGMENT LOOKS LIKE.
OKAY. BUT I STILL DON'T UNDERSTAND HOW THEY ALL ESCAPED.
IF I'M GOING TO FIND THESE PEOPLE, I HAVE TO KNOW EVERYTHING ABOUT THEM.
I KNOW SOMETHING... *UNEXPECTED* HAPPENED OUT THERE, FATHER, AND I WANT TO KNOW WHAT IT WAS.
UNDYING LOVE AND ETERNAL PATIENCE ARE NOT THE SAME THING, CHILD.
DO NOT CONFUSE THEM.
I NEED YOU TO FIND THESE PEOPLE. I NEED YOU TO CATCH THEM. AND I NEED YOU TO DO IT WITHOUT ASKING ANY MORE QUESTIONS.
ARE YOU THE DAUGHTER OF DOOM? CAPABLE OF ALL THINGS?
YES, SIR.
THEN FIND THEM.

DAMN YOU, STEPHEN.

FIND THE QUIETEST PLACE IN THE WORLD--CALL IT HERE, CALL IT NOW--AND IF YOU CLOSE YOUR EYES AND LISTEN, YOU STILL WON'T BE ABLE TO HEAR A THING.
NOT ONE THING, VICTOR. LIKE MOST THINGS THAT PERCEIVE, OUR EARS LIE SO MUCH.

BUT IF YOU SIT STILL--UNMOVING, AT PEACE WITH YOUR PLACE IN THE UNIVERSE--YOU CAN *FEEL* IT. A SLIGHT RUMBLING IN YOUR STOMACH.
A *DISTURBANCE* IN THE WORLD. ONE RESONATING IN YOUR GUTS.
WE HAVE THE *APPEARANCE* OF PEACE... OF BEING WHOLE... BUT I THINK IT ALL MIGHT JUST FLY APART IF WE'RE NOT CAREFUL.
DID YOU BRING ME SOMETHING TO EAT?
I'M SORRY.
I DID NOT. IT DIDN'T OCCUR TO ME.
I HAD OTHER THINGS ON MY MIND.
I DEVOURED EVERYTHING, VICTOR. BUT I'M STILL HUNGRY.
FROM THE TOP OF MY HEAD RIGHT DOWN TO MY LITTLE TOE BITS. COUNTLESS MICROSCOPIC CELLS SWIMMING IN THE SEA OF OWEN AND EACH ONE CRAVES NOURISHMENT.
IF I DON'T EAT SOMETHING SOON, I'LL JUST BE SKIN AND BONES.
STEPHEN STRANGE IS DEAD.

WELL. WELL, NOW.
ISN'T THAT A SURPRISE?
WAS IT CANCER? IT'S *ALWAYS* CANCER.
NO. IT WAS INNER DECAY OF A DIFFERENT SORT.
HIS *DOUBT* KILLED HIM.
INTERESTING. SURPRISING. UNEXPECTED, EVEN. HOW IS THAT POSSIBLE? BECAUSE HE KNEW. HE WAS THERE. HE SAW IT. BUT THEN, OUR EYES ARE LIKE OUR EARS. THEY LIE TOO, DON'T THEY?
HE WAS ONLY THERE AT THE END, MISTER REECE.
AND EVEN I WAS NOT THERE AT THE START.
IN THE BEGINNING, IT WAS JUST YOU AND THEM.
NO.
IT WAS JUST *THEM.*
"THE LORDS OF THE WHITE LIGHT. THOSE FROM BEYOND.
"*BEYONDERS.* OMNIPOTENT. ALL-POWERFUL. MORE CURIOUS THAN A CAT.
"THEY BUILT WHOLE UNIVERSES. RANDOM IDEAS GIVEN FORM. THEY TESTED THEM. THEY TWISTED LIFE INTO EVERY SHAPE POSSIBLE. THEY PUSHED IT AS FAR AS IT COULD GO..."

AND THEN THEY GOT BORED WITH *LIFE* AND STARTED LOVING THE IDEA OF *DEATH.*
SOMETIMES YOU'VE TINKERED ALL YOU CAN...AND THE ONLY THING LEFT TO DO IS TEAR IT ALL DOWN AND START OVER.
SO THEN THEY MADE ME.
YES. YOU.
OWEN REECE. *THE MOLECULE MAN.*
A BOMB BUILT TO DESTROY A UNIVERSE.
NOT *A* BOMB. *THE* BOMB.
BOMB. BOMB. BOMB.
SET ME OFF AND WATCH ME EXPLODE.
IT WAS A GOOD PLAN. THE BEYONDERS...THEY REALLY KNEW THEIR STUFF.
THEY MADE ONE OF ME TO KILL A UNIVERSE. AND ALL OF ME TO KILL THE MULTIVERSE. THE SAME PERSON ACROSS ALL OF REALITY. SLICED UP INTO DELICIOUS LITTLE BITES.
BUT DO YOU KNOW WHAT THE BEYONDERS FORGOT TO PLAN FOR, VICTOR?
YES. THEY MADE YOU A MAN. THEY GAVE YOU *CHOICE.*
WE LIVE OUR LIVES DEFINED BY THE CHOICES WE MAKE. AND IN THE END, THE HIGH COST OF LIVING IS--
ME!
ME. ME. ME. I HAD A CHOICE, AND MY CHOICE WAS *YOU.*
TELL ME, VICTOR. DO YOU EVER WONDER WHO EXACTLY FOUND WHO? FORWARDS AND BACKWARDS IN TIME...
WAS IT *YOU* WHO FOUND ME? OR *I* WHO FOUND *YOU?*
THE ORDER IS OF LITTLE CONSEQUENCE. WHAT MATTERED WAS THAT WE BOTH KNEW WHAT HAD TO BE DONE.
YOU WERE A BOMB MEANT TO SIMULTANEOUSLY EXPLODE. SO WE DECIDED TO SET SOME OF YOU OFF EARLY. BLOW THE PRIMER TO DIMINISH THE CHARGE.

"WE HAD TO KILL ME. LOTS AND LOTS OF ME'S.
"AT FIRST, IT WAS A COST I WAS WILLING TO PAY...
"AND WE BUILT A RELIGION OF BLACK SWANS AROUND THAT IDEA."
WITH EACH ME THAT WAS KILLED, I LOST A BIT OF WHAT MADE ME...ME. IT'S A COST I WAS WILLING TO PAY...
...BUT THE MADNESS WASN'T WORTH IT. WE WEREN'T GOING TO PREVENT THE EARLY DEATH OF THE MULTIVERSE. THE BEYONDERS HAD BUILT ME TOO WELL...
"SO WE GOT TRICKY.
"AND THAT'S WHEN STEPHEN JOINED US--RIGHT BEFORE THE END.

"WHILE THE SWANS WERE BUSY KILLING ME'S...YOU AND I WERE BUSY BUILDING SOMETHING ELSE.
"A BETTER BOMB.
"A BETTER ME."
WE ARE BEYOND.
DREAMERS. DESTROYERS. ALL OF REALITY OUR WHIM.
WHO DARES STAND BEFORE US?
I.
DOOM.
"WE COULDN'T STOP THE BEYONDERS FROM DESTROYING EVERYTHING, BUT WE COULD DRAW THEM OUT...

"DESTROY THEM...
"STEAL THEIR POWER...
"AND STORE IT SOMEPLACE SAFE.
"WHERE IT COULD BE USED TO PRESERVE SOME OF WHAT HAD BEEN LOST."
THE MOLECULE MAN WILL SERVE AS A CONDUIT, STEPHEN. TOGETHER WE CAN SAVE THE REMNANTS OF WORLDS...
THE SCALE OF IT... THE SCOPE...HOW DO YOU CHOOSE WHAT LIVES AND DIES...?
IT'S TOO MUCH TO FATHOM, VICTOR. IT'S TOO MUCH. I... I CAN'T...
YOU HAVE TO DO IT.

AND NOW STEPHEN IS DEAD. GONE. *GOODBYE.*
HIS REMAINING BITS BURIED DEEP IN THE GROUND.
YES.
I WANT YOU TO KNOW THAT IT WAS ME WHO PUT HIM THERE.
I KNOW. YOU THINK I COULDN'T SMELL THE GUILT ON YOU? YOU REEK OF SHAME, GOD.
STEPHEN MAY NOT HAVE FULLY COMPREHENDED IT, BUT HE MADE HIS DECISION, AND IT MARKED HIM AS A THREAT TO WHAT WE HAVE BUILT.
HE LEFT ME NO CHOICE.
AND SO OUR GOOD FRIEND, THE DOCTOR, HAD TO GO.
I THINK YOU'VE STARTED SOMETHING, VICTOR. AN UNRAVELING THAT JUST MIGHT TAKE US ALL DOWN. MAKES ME WONDER WHICH OF US IS NEXT?
IF WE KISS GOD DOOM GOODBYE, THEN SAY FAREWELL TO THIS WORLD ALSO, AS YOU'RE THE ONE WHO'S HOLDING IT TOGETHER.
AND WHAT IF IT'S YOU, MISTER REECE?
WELL... WON'T THAT BE EXCITING?
HMMM. JUST HOW WE LIKE IT.
NEXT TIME BRING ME SOMETHING TO EAT.

THE DEPARTMENT OF SCIENCE.
THE FUTURE FOUNDATION.
JUSTICE DIVISION.
OKAY, EVERYONE, LISTEN UP...
GOD HAS A JOB FOR US-- AND WHEN I SAY GOD, I DO MEAN DADDY.
WE'RE GONNA PLAY A GAME OF HIDE-AND-SEEK WITH A BUNCH OF BAD BOYS AND GIRLS WHO PRESENT A THREAT TO THE KINGDOMS AND POSSIBLY THE WORLD ITSELF.
DOOM WANTS US TO FIND THESE REBELS.
SO, AS OF NOW, ALL OTHER PROJECTS ARE SUSPENDED.
NO DEEP DIVING IN THE NEGATIVE ZONE INSIDE THE PLANET, NO CATALOGING OBJECTS OF POWER, NONE OF IT.
AND BENTLEY, THAT INCLUDES YOUR LITTLE EXPERIMENTS SOUTH OF THE SHIELD.
OH, COME ON!
LIFE'S TOUGH.
ALEX, DRAGON...FILL EVERYONE IN ON WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT THE CRIME SCENE.

WELL, AS YOU GUYS KNOW WE'VE DEVELOPED SOME PRETTY SPECIALIZED EQUIPMENT FOR DETECTING AND DIFFERENTIATING SPECIFIC ENERGY SIGNATURES.
I MEAN, IT'S ALWAYS BEEN HARD, BECAUSE OUR WORLD NATURALLY GIVES OFF SO MUCH BACKGROUND RADIATION. YOU KNOW, *GOD PARTICLES...*
CASTLE DOOM
THE STUFF OF DOOM.
WHICH, AS YOU ALSO KNOW, RADIATES OUT FROM THE POINT OF ITS HIGHEST CONCENTRATION: *CASTLE DOOM.*
CASTLE DOOM
NOW, THIS IS THE BASIC ENERGY FOUND AT THE HEART OF EVERYTHING ON OUR PLANET. WE'RE ALL MADE OF THIS STUFF--WHICH IS WHY UNTIL WE BUILT OUR EQUIPMENT WE COULDN'T TELL ANY OF IT APART.
OBVIOUSLY, NOW WE CAN.
AND SINCE WE'VE BEEN RECORDING THE READINGS, WE'VE NOTICED THERE ARE ALWAYS TINY ENERGY SPIKES POPPING UP WHEN ONE OF HIS AGENTS--
THORS. GOD, I HATE THE THORS!
--ANY TIME ONE OF HIS AGENTS IS DEPLOYED. THESE ARE PRETTY EASY TO PICK OUT.

AS ARE MAJOR INCIDENTS OF DOOM STUFF.
LIKE WHEN GOD HIMSELF ACTS, THE READINGS ARE OFF THE CHART--LIKE A SMALL STAR LIGHTING UP THE WHOLE WORLD.
EXCUSE ME. I'M NOT SURE I RECOGNIZE THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS INFORMATION, ALEX.
ALL OF WHAT YOU'RE SAYING IS EXACTLY WHAT WOULD BE EXPECTED.
AND SUCH DATA BORES US.
MIND
BODY
WHAT'S *INTERESTING*, DOCTOR TESLA, IS THAT WE'VE BEEN DOCUMENTING ALL THIS FOR THE LAST YEAR, AND IN ALL THE WORLD THERE'S BEEN ONLY ONE PERSON WHOSE READING--WHOSE POWER--WAS COMPLETELY INDEPENDENT OF DOOM'S.
THE SHERIFF. HIS POWER SPIKED ON THE NEGATIVE SIDE... IT ALWAYS READ AS AN *ABSENCE OF DOOM.*
UH-HUH. CALL IT DARK MATTER, AND IT SPIKED YESTERDAY BEFORE THE REBELS DISAPPEARED.
WE BELIEVE THAT STEPHEN STRANGE IS THE ONE WHO SCATTERED WHOEVER THESE PEOPLE ARE.
WHICH IMPLIES WHAT? MIND CONTROL? POSSESSION?
I FORESEE SOMETHING *WORSE.*
SO DO I, NOSTRADAMUS.
SO HERE'S WHAT WE'RE GOING TO DO...

"WE'RE GOING TO TAKE THIS ALL THE WAY TO THE END OF THE LINE.
DOOMGARD.
"NO MATTER WHERE IT GOES.
EGYPTIA.
"I'LL HANDLE ANY NOISE FROM THE THRONE, BUT FOR NOW WHAT WE LEARN STAYS WITH US...
BAR SINISTER.
"UNDERSTAND?"
DOOMSTADT.

I WANT TO KNOW WHAT *REALLY* HAPPENED.
"I WANT TO KNOW WHO THESE PEOPLE ARE.
"I WANT TO KNOW WHERE THEY DISAPPEARED TO."
I WANT TO KNOW WHAT THEY'RE CAPABLE OF.
"AND MORE THAN ANYTHING ELSE...

THE SHIELD.
"...WE HAVE TO FIND OUT WHAT THEY WANT.
"AND WHY IT SCARES GOD SO BADLY."

06

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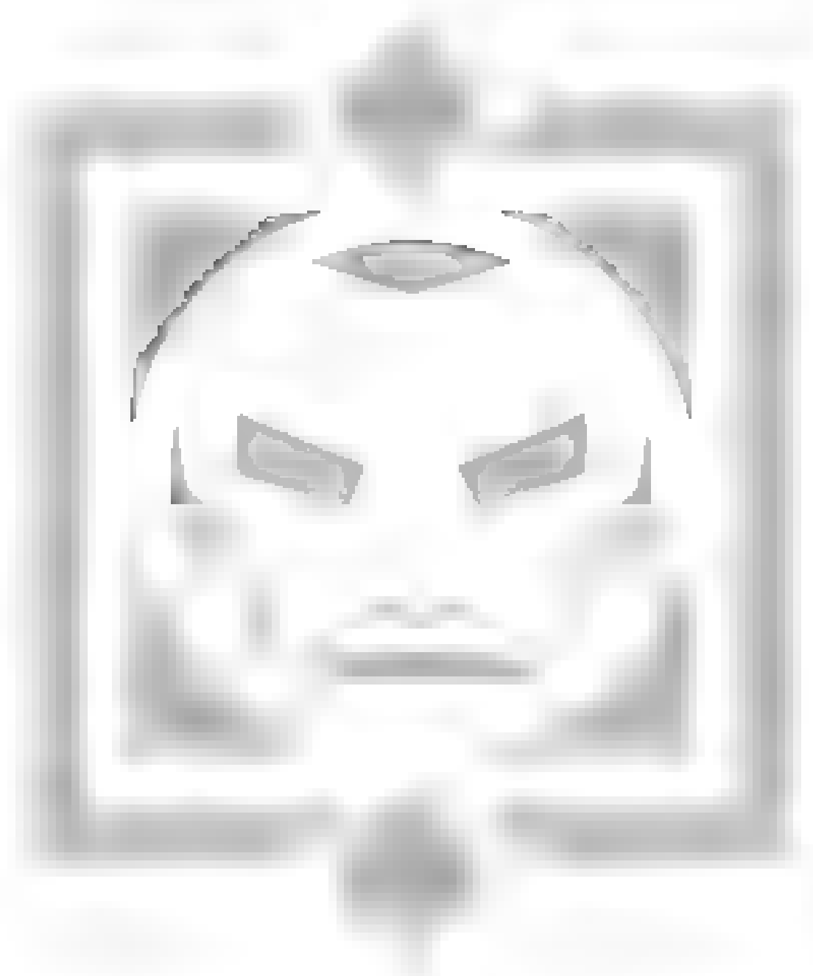
WE RAISE THEM UP...
...JUST SO WE CAN PULL THEM DOWN



THREE WEEKS LATER

CASTLE DOOM.
I'LL BE HONEST, DAD...
I DON'T HAVE VERY GOOD NEWS.
MY WORLD IS IN DISARRAY, VALERIA. RECENT DISORDER HAS ESCALATED INTO OPEN REBELLION IN SEVERAL KINGDOMS.
IN THAT CHAOS MY THORS GROW WEARY, AND AN ILL WIND PORTENDS EVEN WORSE TO COME...NEVERTHELESS, I WOULD HAVE THE TRUTH FROM YOU, DAUGHTER...
AND I WOULD HAVE IT NOW.
OKAY, IF YOU SAY SO...
BASICALLY, THE SEARCH FOR THE REBELS WHO KILLED STEPHEN STRANGE HAS BEEN A FAILURE. EVEN IF WE'RE SUPER PATIENT, EXTRAPOLATING OUT THE LITTLE SUCCESS WE'VE HAD OVER A LONGER PERIOD OF TIME--
HONESTLY, DAD, OUR CHANCES PRETTY MUCH SUCK...
THE ONLY LUCK WE'VE HAD WAS APOCALYPSE STUMBLING ONTO THESE TWO SEVERAL DAYS AGO.
THE BARON AND HIS HORSEMEN DID QUITE A NUMBER ON THEM, BUT THEY WERE STILL INTACT ENOUGH FOR US TO GET A LOOK INSIDE THEIR HEADS.
FIRST WE FOUND OUT THAT THE BEAST MAN IS CALLED CORBIS. THE OTHER IS, APPARENTLY, HIS PROXY. THEN WE--

HOLD.
IS SHE CORRECT?
NO.
THEY ARE NOT COMPANIONS, THEY ARE HUSBAND AND WIFE. THE MALE IS *CORVUS GLAIVE*. SHE IS *PROXIMA MIDNIGHT*.
THEY ARE THE SURVIVING MEMBERS OF *THE BLACK ORDER*. THE GENERALS OF THE TYRANT *THANOS*.
I MUST SAY...
CONFESSION, MY LOVE, IS THE MANIFESTATION OF CONTRITION. IF THIS ONE HAS TRULY SEEN THE ERROR OF HER WAYS...
...WHY DO YOU HAVE TO ASK FOR INFORMATION THAT SHOULD BE FREELY GIVEN?
SHE WAS LOST, SUSAN.
THIS *BLACK SWAN* IS FROM ANOTHER WORLD. IT WILL TAKE HER TIME TO FIND HER WAY.
BUT YOU *WILL* FIND IT, WON'T YOU, CHILD?
I AM HOME, MY LORD.
ANNU ERSETU DAMIQ.
GOOD. AND IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE YOU THINK WE SHOULD HEAR AT THIS TIME?

"THERE WAS THE BATTLE. WE WERE ALL THERE WITH YOU. AND THEN, SUDDENLY, WE WERE GONE.
"SCATTERED..."
I THEN MADE MY WAY HERE. I CAN ONLY ASSUME THAT CORVUS AND PROXIMA FOUND EACH OTHER.
OF THE REST...I DO NOT KNOW.
BUT YOU *DO* KNOW WHO THEY ARE?
SOME.
NOT ALL.
THEN TELL US WHAT YOU DO KNOW. TELL US *WHO* YOU--
FORGIVE ME, SUSAN, BUT THAT IS SECONDARY TO MY PRIMARY CONCERN. AT THE MOMENT, I ONLY CARE WHERE THESE REBELS ARE *NOW* AND THAT THEY ARE BROUGHT BEFORE ME.
TELL US, VALERIA...
DEEP IN THE RECESSES OF OUR CAPTIVES' MINDS, WAS THERE A KERNEL--SOME SLIVER--OF INFORMATION TELLING US WHERE THE OTHERS ARE?
DO WE KNOW ANYTHING OF THEIR PLANS?
I'M SORRY, FATHER...
NO.
WE HAVE NO IDEA WHERE THEY ARE. WE HAVE NO IDEA WHAT THEY'RE DOING.

THE FOUNDATION.
YOU GUYS GETTING THIS?
YEP. YOU'RE COMING IN LOUD AND CLEAR. HOW ARE THINGS ON THE GOD DADDY FRONT?
EVER GETTING THE FEELING YOU'RE BEING LIED TO?
NOT REALLY. NO.
THAT'S BECAUSE I'M AN AWESOME LIAR.
A SUPER LIAR, ACTUALLY. IT MIGHT BE MY BEST TRAIT.
YOU THINK?
I DON'T KNOW...
I COULD BE LYYYING.
IGNORE BENTLEY. YOU OKAY?
I'VE GOT SPIDERS IN MY HEAD, ALEX. I'M HAVING A HARD TIME IGNORING MY NORMAL INSTINCTS AND KEEPING MY NOSE FROM WHERE IT SHOULDN'T BE.

WELL, SPEAKING OF...
WE'VE HAD A BREAKTHROUGH IN OUR LITTLE EXPERIMENT.
YOU FINALLY FILTERED OUT THE BACKGROUND RADIATION OF THE PLANET AND FOUND THE SOURCE OF MY FATHER'S POWER?
UH-HUH.
WHERE?
YOU'RE STANDING ON IT.
OKAY. I GOTTA GO THEN. I'LL RE--
OH, HEY, WAIT! ONE FINAL INTERESTING ITEM...THE NIGHT MACHINE FOUND MORE OF THESE DRONE THINGS.
SIX THIS TIME.
13
WE ADDED THE NEW LOCATIONS IN WITH THE OTHERS WE FOUND. IT EXTRAPOLATES OUT TO A GEOMETRIC SEARCH PATTERN.
SOMEBODY'S LOOKING FOR SOMETHING.
WHAT DO YOU THINK?
⸗SIGH⸗
WHO'S BUILDING THIS CRAP?

PROJECT 42. SOMEWHERE INSIDE BATTLEWORLD.
IF WE TREAT THIS SIMPLY AS A PROBLEM TO BE SOLVED...
...THEN I WOULD ARGUE THE QUESTION OF "CAN WE" MUST BE SECONDARY TO "SHOULD WE."
Well, I would argue that you're wrong.
The primary problem--our only problem--is finding a way to defeat Doom.
To that end, we need to locate a weakness. Some kind of crack in that heavenly armor of his.
AND IF WE DEFEAT HIM--
Oh, I mean to destroy him.
SEMANTICS. WHAT THEN HAPPENS TO THIS WORLD? ALL THAT REMAINS OF WHAT WAS...
DOES IT JUST FLY APART? SIMPLY CEASE TO EXIST? OR WOULD IT SOMEHOW REMAIN?
WE HAVE TO BE CONCERNED ABOUT WHAT'S ON THE OTHER SIDE OF DOOM.

Your premise is flawed, Reed. The belief that, no matter what, he's going to be able to hold it together...
Just look. I'm downloading the data from your probes now. The Prophet has raised an army--an endless legion of Doom deniers--that now marches towards his throne and the World Tree.
THE PROPHET.
THIS IS ANOTHER ONE OF YOUR SIDE PROJECTS?
Maybe. It makes me wonder, if I confessed all of my secret plans, would you also tell me yours?
No. Of course you wouldn't...
Who could ever truly understand the machinations that go on inside that head of yours?
So...perhaps we should simply agree to focus on the problem that brought us together?
How to kill a god.
AND I TOLD YOU ALREADY...I'M NOT READY TO CONSIDER THAT.
You know, I look at your face...which is *my* face...and I see the age on it.
I wonder how it became so sentimental? So soft. So weak.
IT'S EASY, REED, WHEN YOU LEARN TO CARE ABOUT THINGS OTHER THAN YOURSELF.

You mean things like this?
CLICK!
OUR PROBLEM...
OUR PROBLEM... AS I SEE IT, IS DETERMINING HOW VICTOR CAME TO POSSESS SUCH POWER.
And how are we going to do that?
OH, A PLAN EXISTS...

"...I'VE GOT MY BEST PEOPLE WORKING ON IT."
CASTLE DOOM.
What's the gizmo say?
I DON'T THINK IT'S WORKING RIGHT...
IT SAYS IT'S OVER THERE SOMEWHERE, AROUND 60 TO 70 FEET IN THAT DIRECTION...BUT THE FOCAL POINT IS ABOUT 10 FEET DOWN.
WHICH DOESN'T MAKE SENSE.
Right. Because there's a giant *statue* in the way.
IT COULD BE BURIED UNDERNEATH.
ACTUALLY, THERE'S A TRAPDOOR.
I FOUND IT EARLIER.
YOU'RE LOOKING FOR THE SOURCE TOO, AREN'T YOU?
HOLY EVIL PLANS. THE RUMORS ARE TRUE...
IS THAT REALLY YOU, VAL?
AM I SUPPOSED TO KNOW YOU?

IT'S ME. SPIDER-MAN. PETER.
HOW DID YOU KNOW WE WERE LOOKING FOR THE THING?
BECAUSE I WAS, TOO. I HAD MY PEOPLE WORKING ON FINDING THE SOURCE...BUT, I'M SORRY...I DON'T KNOW YOU.
HEY, LET ME SEE THAT!
UGH. OBVIOUSLY BUILT BY THE SAME PERSON WHO MADE THE DRONES. MIGHT AS WELL HAVE SIGNED THEIR NAME TO IT.
THIS IS EMBARRASSING. WHO BUILT THIS?
UH, REED RICHARDS.
NEVER HEARD OF HIM. DOESN'T MATTER. TELL HIM I SAID THIS IS SHODDY WORK AND HE SHOULD GET HIS ACT TOGETHER. OKAY?
...SURE.
SO ARE YOU COMING INSIDE WITH US?
I'VE SPENT THE LAST HOUR THINKING ABOUT IT, AND...NO. I DON'T THINK I'M GOING IN.
Why not?
BECAUSE I ALREADY HAVE SPIDERS IN MY HEAD. AND FINDING OUT THAT MY FATHER MIGHT NOT BE QUITE WHO HE SAYS HE IS WOULD BE, WELL...
LOOK, END OF THE DAY, I'M JUST A KID. I'M NOT EMOTIONALLY PREPARED FOR THAT KIND OF STUFF.
SO YOU GO ON WITHOUT ME. THE TRAPDOOR IS AT THE BASE OF THE STATUE.
OH, BUT YOU'RE GOING TO HAVE TO ANSWER A COUPLE QUESTIONS IF YOU WANT ME TO KEEP THIS QUIET.
UH, SURE.
WERE YOU ON THE SHIP? THAT VESSEL WE FOUND?
ONE OF THEM. IT WAS A LIFE RAFT.
OKAY...AND NONE OF YOU FROM THE RAFT KILLED STEPHEN STRANGE, DID YOU?
NO. OF COURSE NOT.
RIGHT.
I DIDN'T THINK SO.

CAN YOU *FEEL* THAT?
TECTONIC PLATES GRINDING AT THE EDGES, LIKE PIECES FROM DIFFERENT PUZZLES TRYING TO FORM A SINGLE PICTURE, BUT THEY NEVER WILL.
UNDERSTAND? THEY DON'T *BELONG* TOGETHER.
IT'S GOING TO FLY APART...I KNOW IT IS. I DEVOURED EVERYTHING--I ATE IT ALL--BUT I'M STILL *HUNGRY.*
HELLOOO, SPIDER-MEN.
Who is--
OH, BOY. IT'S OWEN REECE. THE MOLECULE MAN.
THAT'S ME.
DID YOU BRING ME SOMETHING TO EAT?
I DIDN'T ACTUALLY KNOW THERE WOULD BE *SOMEONE* DOWN HERE...
I DIDN'T...I'M SORRY. NO, OWEN. I DON'T HAVE ANYTHING.
Me eith--
Hey, wait...I forgot. I *do* have something.
There's a hamburger in my pocket.
I HAVE TO HAVE IT.

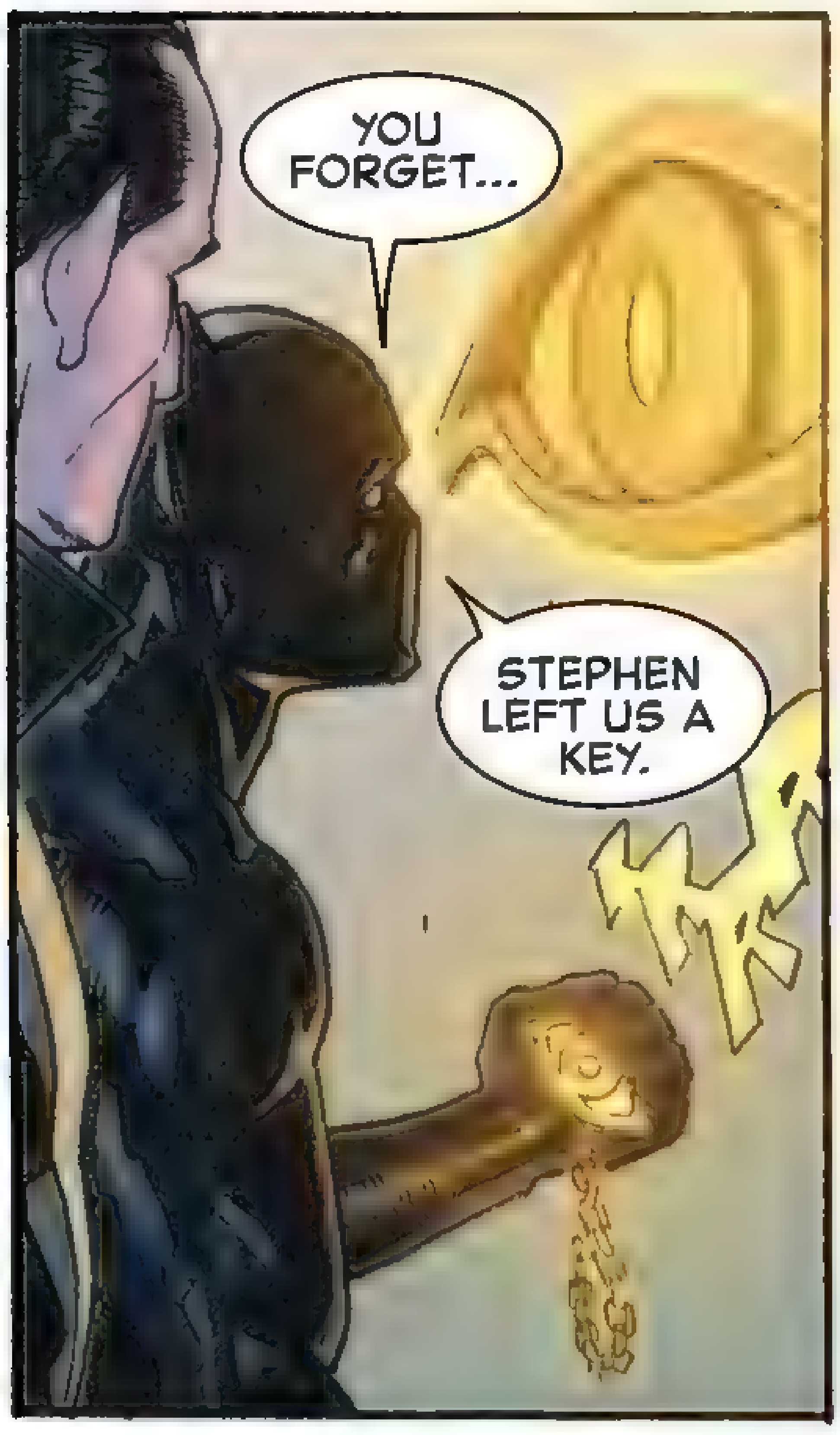
HOW DO YOU FORGET YOU HAVE A HAMBURGER IN YOUR POCKET?
We've been busy.
IT'S A *HAMBURGER.*
Hamburgers are what I like. Puberty is rough, Pete. I'm starving all day long. 'Cause I'm gonna be big.
NO, MILES. I MEAN, WHERE DID YOU GET IT? DON'T SAY YOUR POCKET.
From home. You know, my Earth.
SO YOU'RE TELLING ME THAT'S AN EIGHT-YEAR, THREE-WEEK-OLD HAMBURGER?
I don't think the suspended animation counts.
OKAY. SO THAT'S A THREE-WEEK-OLD HAMBURGER?
Yeah.
AND?
Oh, man. He shouldn't eat that.
OHHHH, SO GOOD.
SO GOOD. AND NOW I FEEL MUCH BETTER--MOMENTARILY COLLECTED ENOUGH TO GUESS WHERE THIS IS HEADED...
YOU'RE FOLLOWING A CERTAIN TENDRIL. SPIDERS SCURRYING ALONG A VERY PARTICULAR WEB.
BURP
I'M RIGHT... AREN'T I?
UH, *MAYBE.* WE WERE SENT TO FIND THE SOURCE OF DOOM'S POWER. ALL I CAN SEE HERE IS A BIG WHITE ROOM.
ANY IDEA WHERE AROUND HERE WE MIGHT FIND THAT?
OH, YES...
YOU'RE LOOKING AT HIM.

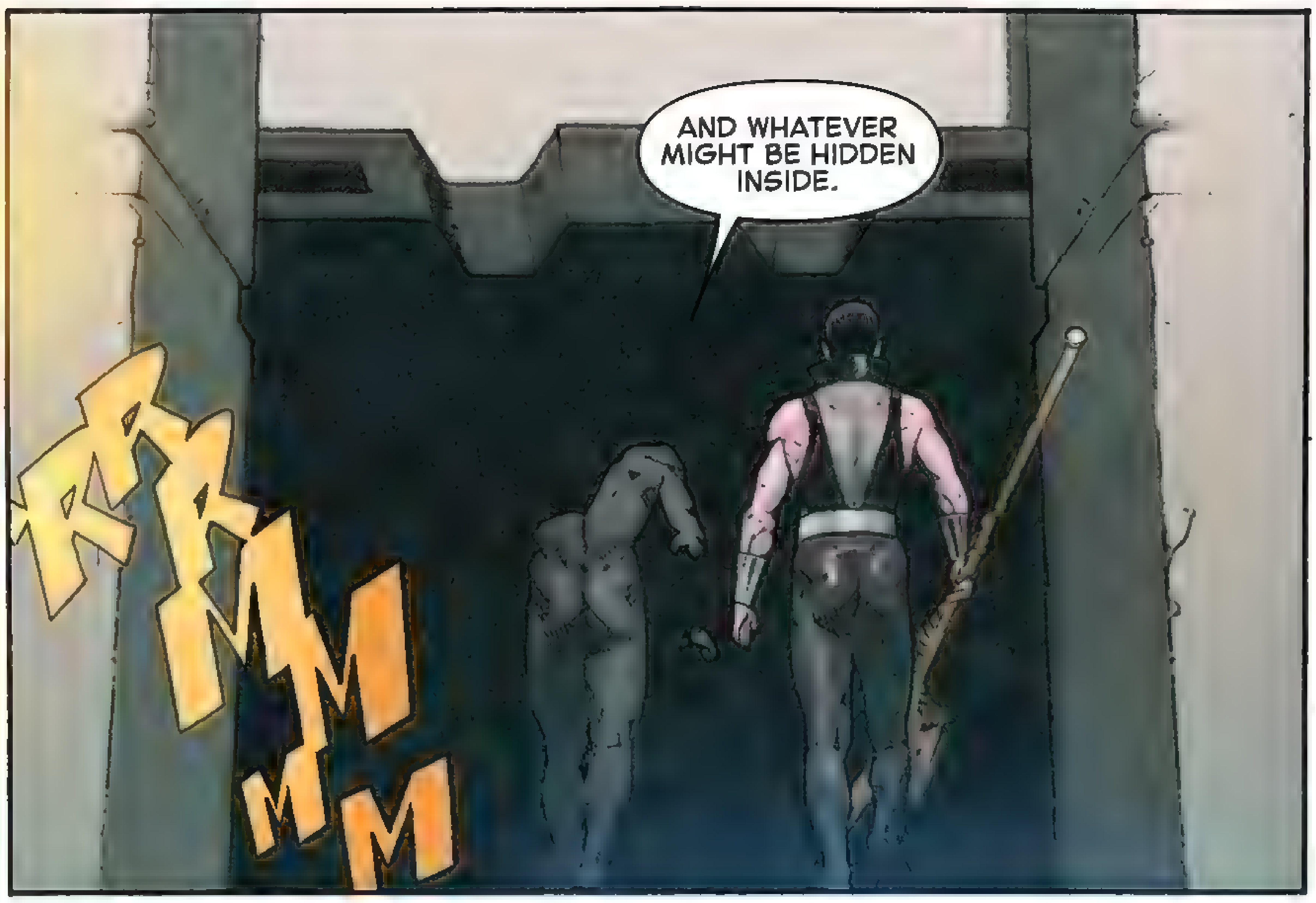
TELL ME, BARONESS PRYOR...
...WHAT DOES HE CALL HIMSELF?
THE PROPHET.
AND HE IS THE SOLE PERSON BEHIND THIS UPRISING? IF I LOOK CLOSELY, I WON'T FIND ONE OF YOU STANDING IN THE SHADOWS...PROPPING HIM UP?
IT PAINS ME THAT YOU THINK I MIGHT BE CAPABLE OF SUCH TREACHERY, MY LORD.
IS MY LOYALTY NOT APPARENT? IS MY LOVE NOT UNCONDITIONAL?
AND IF I WANTED YOUR THRONE, GOD, I WOULD TAKE IT.
THE MAESTRO HIDES FROM NO ONE.
IN MOMENTS LIKE THESE, THE LESS I SAY THE BETTER.
THIS PROPHET IS REAL. THIS UPRISING IS REAL.
HIS WORDS RING TRUE IN THE ABSENCE OF YOUR OWN, AND THEY HAVE SPREAD LIKE A FIRE THROUGH THE KINGDOMS.
"HE HAS RAISED AN ARMY--TWO DAYS AGO THE UPPER AND LOWER KINGDOMS FELL TO HIS MOB...
"AND IT GROWS AS HE HEADS THIS WAY. IGNORE HIM AT YOUR OWN PERIL, MY LORD."

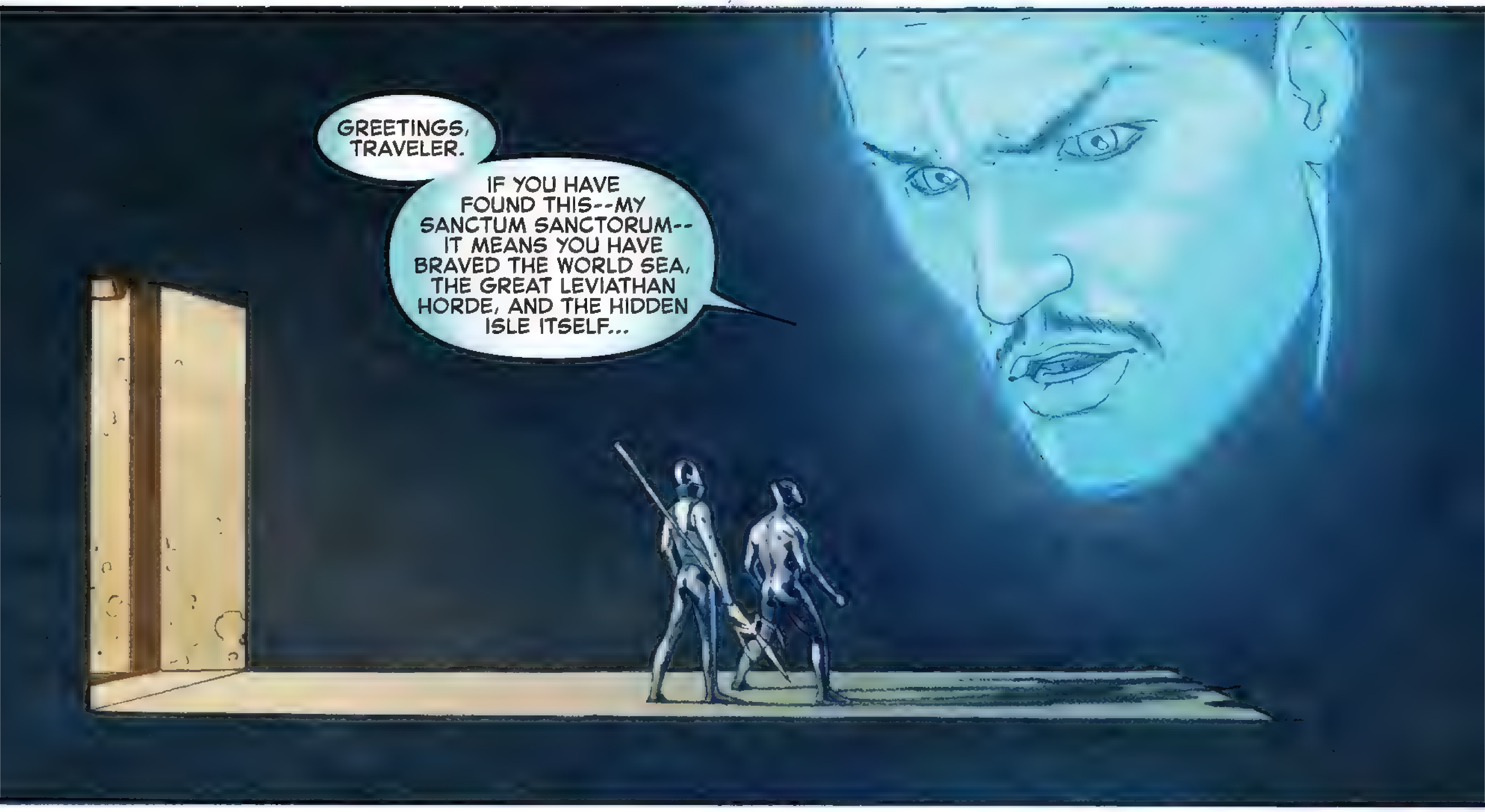
I HOLD THE HEAVENS UP JUST SO THE EARTH CAN TREMBLE BENEATH ME.
DAMN YOU AGAIN, STEPHEN, FOR LEAVING ME WITH ALL THIS.
DO YOU HAVE MORE TO OFFER THAN DEFERENCE AND POSTURING, APOCALYPSE?
ONLY THE COUNSEL OF THE FIT, MY LORD. ONLY THE COUNSEL OF THE STRONG.
YOU ARE GOD, AND THE VERY EXISTENCE OF THOSE WHO SAY OTHERWISE IS AN OFFENSE. ONLY THE LOYAL SHOULD LIVE.
KILL THE REST.
I SEE. POWER STRUCTURES MUST BE MAINTAINED.
DOMINANCE MUST BE DISPLAYED. RAINING A LEGION OF THORS DOWN UPON THEM WOULD MEET YOUR APPROVAL, I SUPPOSE.
CERTAINLY. YOU *MUST* ACT.
I AGREE. BUT WHY WASTE MY MOST LOYAL AND MOST WORTHY ON A PRETENDER AND HIS MOB?
YOU DO IT. ALL OF YOU.
AND I WARN YOU, TARRY NOT...
...I AM LOSING WHAT LITTLE GRACE I STILL POSSESS.
WELL...THAT DID NOT GO AS PLANNED.
WHAT DO YOU THINK WE SHOULD DO?

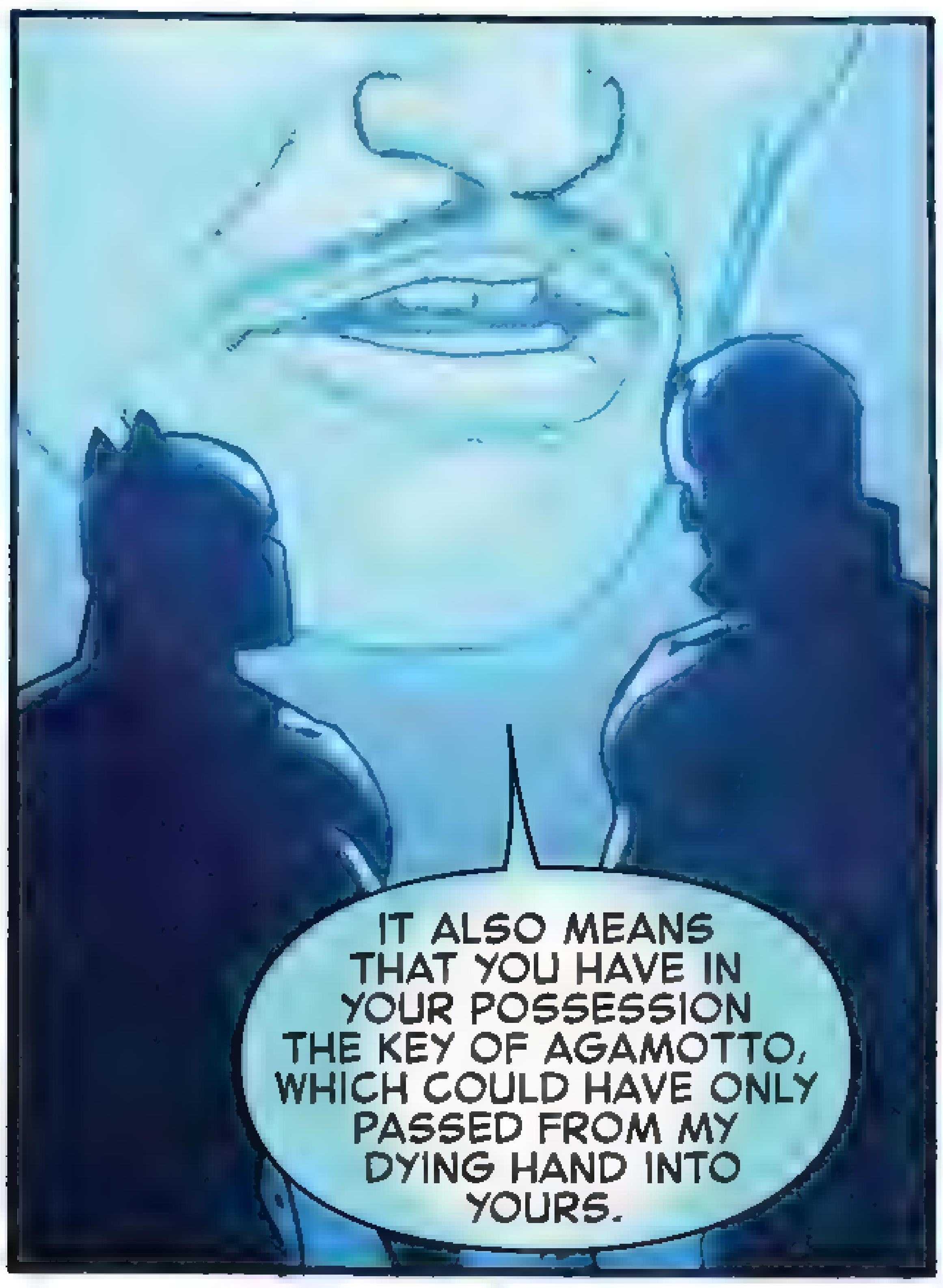
BAR SINISTER.
I HAVE SOME IDEAS. BUT YOU FIRST.
OKAY, MY DEAR CAPTAIN. GOD DOOM WANTS ME TO SEND A FULL COMPLEMENT OF WARRIORS TO DISABUSE THESE NONBELIEVERS OF THEIR SINFUL WAYS.
I COULD SEND LESS. A PITTANCE PERHAPS?
CRACK
OR I COULD SEND EVERYONE.
BECAUSE I'M A GOOD, GOOD BOY.
SM
WAIT... I'VE GOT IT NOW.
I KNOW WHAT WE SHOULD DO.
LET'S BE NAUGHTY!
NOW YOU'RE TALKING.

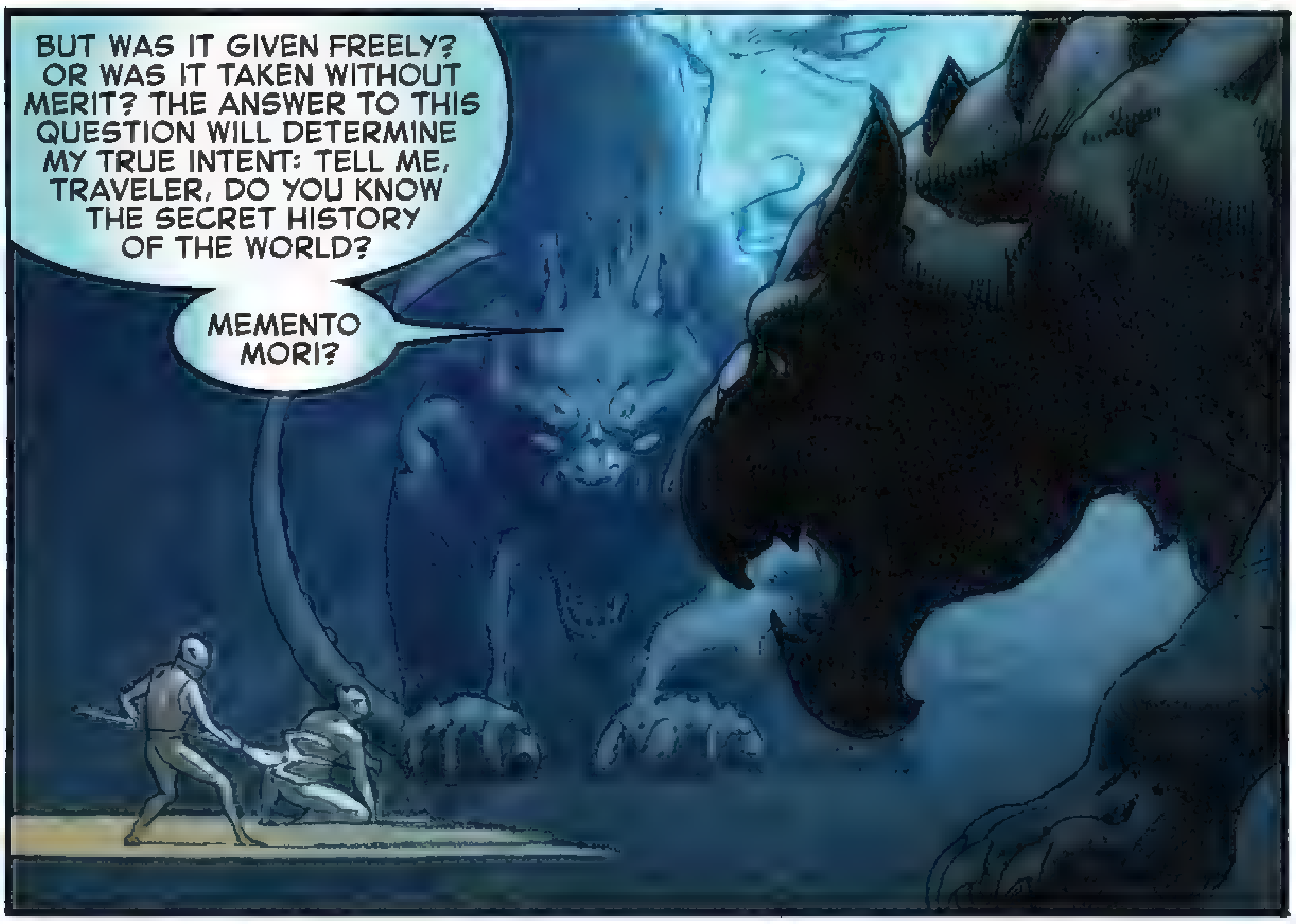
THE HIDDEN ISLE OF AGAMOTTO.
WE ONLY HAD TO CROSS THE WORLD SEA SEVERAL TIMES BEFORE WE FINALLY FOUND THE DOCTOR'S HIDDEN ISLE.
TELL ME, T'CHALLA, WHAT'S THE GREATER MIRACLE--THAT WE ACTUALLY FOUND IT, OR THAT WE FOUND IT WITHOUT KILLING ONE ANOTHER?
THE ENORMITY OF WHAT WE'VE BEEN THROUGH... OF ALL THAT LED TO THIS...
I THINK I EVENTUALLY REALIZED THAT THERE WAS NO AVOIDING WHAT HAPPENED TO OUR WORLD.
YOU'RE A KING OF ASHES NOW, NAMOR. I AM KING OF THE DEAD...THERE IS NOTHING LEFT TO FIGHT OVER.
NOTHING BEHIND US...AND ONLY THIS NEW WORLD BEFORE US.
IT'S JUST A *DOOR,* T'CHALLA.
AND A LOCKED ONE AT THAT.


YOU FORGET...
STEPHEN LEFT US A KEY.
KRR


RRMMMM
AND WHATEVER MIGHT BE HIDDEN INSIDE.


GREETINGS, TRAVELER.
IF YOU HAVE FOUND THIS--MY SANCTUM SANCTORUM--IT MEANS YOU HAVE BRAVED THE WORLD SEA, THE GREAT LEVIATHAN HORDE, AND THE HIDDEN ISLE ITSELF...


IT ALSO MEANS THAT YOU HAVE IN YOUR POSSESSION THE KEY OF AGAMOTTO, WHICH COULD HAVE ONLY PASSED FROM MY DYING HAND INTO YOURS.


BUT WAS IT GIVEN FREELY? OR WAS IT TAKEN WITHOUT MERIT? THE ANSWER TO THIS QUESTION WILL DETERMINE MY TRUE INTENT: TELL ME, TRAVELER, DO YOU KNOW THE SECRET HISTORY OF THE WORLD?
MEMENTO MORI?

ILLUMINATUS.
GOOD.
I HOPE MY PASSING WAS OF CONSEQUENCE.
SOME THINGS--SUCH AS MY KNOWLEDGE OF THIS WORLD GOD DOOM AND I BUILT TOGETHER--WILL BE LOST FOREVER...
BUT SOME MAY BE PASSED ON.
BZZZT
AS SUCH, I LEAVE TO YOU ALL THE ITEMS OF TRUE SIGNIFICANCE THAT I OWN...
OF WHICH THERE ARE ONLY TWO.
THE FIRST IS ONE OF THE FEW ARTIFACTS THAT TRANSCENDS THE PATCHWORK NATURE OF THIS PLANET. THE *SIEGE COURAGEOUS* IS AN OBJECT OF POWER THAT WILL TRANSPORT YOU ANYWHERE YOU WISH TO GO...
AS WELL AS TRANSFORM THE TRAVELER IN A MANNER BEFITTING THEIR TRUE P[illegible]AL
MY GOD.
WHAT IS IT?
THE SECOND ITEM IS GEOGRAPHICALLY RESTRICTED TO DOOMSTADT. HOME TO CASTLE DOOM, THE WORLD TREE AND GOD HIMSELF.
YOU MIGHT NOT KNOW THAT THIS WORLD HAS BEEN CONSTRUCTED FROM THE SURVIVING REMNANTS OF WORLDS DESTROYED IN THE MULTIVERSAL COLLAPSE.

EACH SECTION IS A SLICE OF A SINGLE NATIVE UNIVERSE. WHICH IS WHY WHEN I FOUND ONE CONTAINING ALL THE GEMS, I MADE SURE THAT CASTLE DOOM WAS BUILT IN THAT SECTION.
I LEAVE TO YOU MY MOST PRECIOUS POSSESSION...
WHAT DO YOU THINK?
DON'T LOOK AT ME. WE BOTH KNOW I CAN'T BE TRUSTED.
AN INFINITY GAUNTLET.
USE IT WISELY, AND IF YOU MUST, USE IT QUICKLY...
FOR IT JUST MAY BE THE ONLY THING ON THIS WORLD WITH WHICH ONE CAN SMITE GOD.

FRANKLIN!
TIME FOR BED!
COMING, MOM.
DID YOU HAVE A GOOD DAY?
YEAH. GALACTUS AND I WENT FISHING AND CAUGHT A LEVIATHAN. WE EVEN SAW AN ENTIRE SCHOOL OF THEM!
REALLY?
YEAH. I'VE NEVER SEEN THAT MANY SO CLOSE TO THE SHORE. IT WAS INSANE.
HEY, MOM.
UH-HUH.
WILL YOU TELL ME A STORY BEFORE I GO TO BED?
I'D LOVE TO. ANY REQUESTS?
I WANT TO HEAR ABOUT *THE FANTASTIC FOUR.*
I'VE TOLD YOU THAT ONE A THOUSAND TIMES, FRANKLIN.
YEAH. I KNOW. BUT I'M SCARED ONE DAY I'LL FORGET IF YOU STOP TELLING IT.

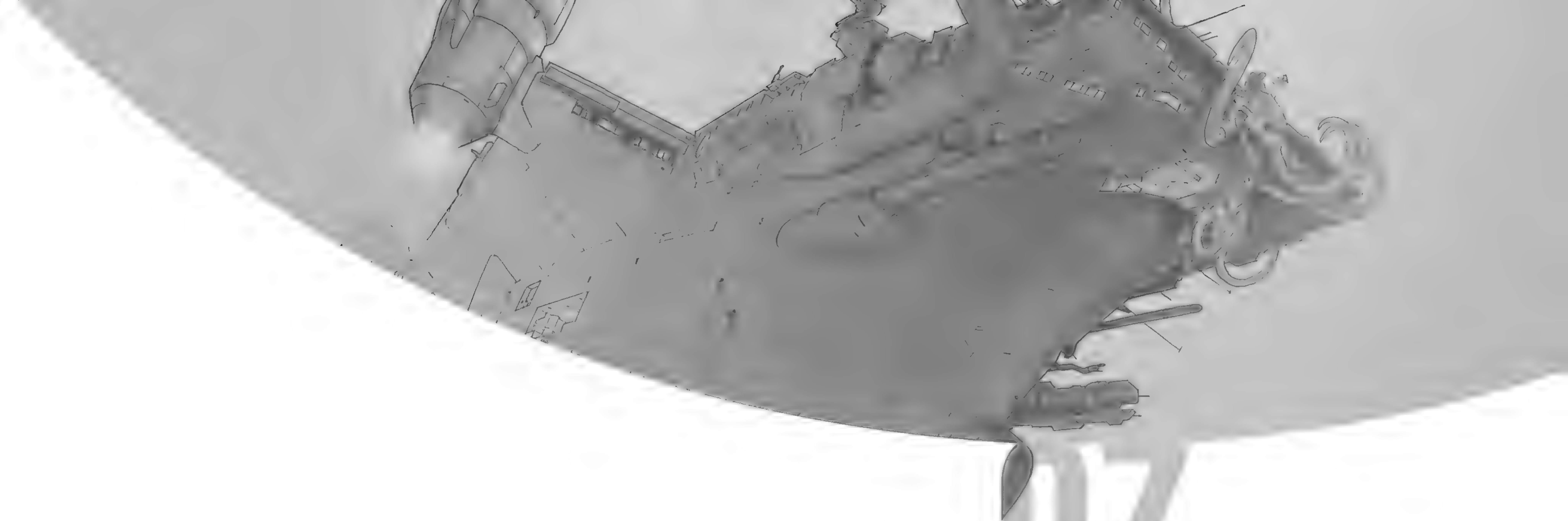
"OKAY. ONE MORE TIME...
"THERE WERE FOUR OF US. IT WAS ME, MY BROTHER, JONATHAN, OUR FRIEND, BEN GRIMM, AND OUR FATHER... DOCTOR FRANKLIN STORM.
"WE WENT ON WHAT WE THOUGHT WAS GOING TO BE AN INCREDIBLE JOURNEY, BUT SOMETHING WENT WRONG AND OUR SHIP CRASHED TO THE EARTH.
"BUT SOMETIMES, FRANKLIN, FAILING IS JUST THE FIRST STEP IN AN UNEXPECTED, AND EVEN AMAZING, ADVENTURE.
"WE WERE *CHANGED.* ALL OF US. EMPOWERED, WE BECAME HEROES AND PROTECTED EARTH.
"BUT THEN, ONE DAY, THAT WORLD ENDED...
"AND THE WORLD WE'RE IN NOW BEGAN."
AND THAT'S WHEN YOU MET DAD.
THAT'S WHEN HE SAVED US.

"WHEN IT WAS FORGED, THIS WORLD WAS A FRIGHTENING PLACE. A DARK AND DANGEROUS TIME.
"IT WAS NIGHT, AND ALL THAT SEEMED TO EXIST WAS WAR. THAT WAS WHEN YOUR GRANDFATHER DIED...
"AND WE WOULD HAVE DIED AS WELL..."
BUT THERE WAS A LIGHT. BRILLIANT AND BLINDING...
IT WAS YOUR FATHER.
"HE MADE A WORLD FROM NOTHING.
"HE MADE A WORLD THAT WAS *EVERYTHING.*
"THAT WAS THE DAY THE FANTASTIC FOUR DIED AND WAS REPLACED WITH SOMETHING BETTER.
"YOUR FATHER HELPED ME BURY MY FATHER AND THEN TOGETHER WE BROUGHT ORDER TO THIS WORLD.
"YOUR UNCLE JOHNNY EVEN BECAME THE SUN SO THERE WOULD BE LESS NIGHT."
BUT WHAT HAPPENED TO UNCLE BEN? YOU NEVER SAY.
BECAUSE THAT, YOUNG MAN, IS ANOTHER STORY FOR ANOTHER DAY.
FOR WHEN YOU ARE OLDER.

THE SHIELD. DETENTION LEVEL.
YOUR STORY'S CRAP, PAL. YOU WANNA HEAR A *REAL* STORY? I'LL TELL YA A TRUE ONE...
IT'S ABOUT A GUY WHO HAD TO LEAVE THE ONLY FAMILY HE EVER HAD BEHIND BECAUSE GOD NEEDED SOMEONE TO KEEP THE NIGHTMARES OUT.
SO I SAID GOODBYE TO SUE AND JOHNNY, AND BECAME THE SHIELD SO THE WORLD COULD HAVE SOME SORTA *PEACE*. SOME SORTA *CHANCE.*
AND NOW YOU'RE HERE TELLIN' ME THAT IT AIN'T BEEN WORTH IT?
YES.
I'M TELLING YOU THAT YOUR GOD PUT YOU HERE TO KEEP YOU OUT OF THE WAY. BECAUSE HE FEARS YOU.
JUST AS HE FEARED THE TORCH AND CAST HIM OUT AS WELL.
YOU SEE, I KNOW A SECRET.

I KNOW WHO YOU REALLY ARE, BEN GRIMM. YOU ARE WARRIOR... A HERO...
"AND WHERE I AM FROM, YOU ARE THE CLOSEST FRIEND OF DOOM'S GREATEST ENEMY. YOU HAVE SHAMED HIM TIME AND TIME OVER.
"DOOM IS A PETTY USURPER OF POWERS FAR GRANDER THAN HIMSELF.
"SPEAKING AS ONE WHO HAS FELT THE UNIVERSE WRITHE IN HIS CLENCHED FIST, THIS POWER SHOULD NOT BE LEFT TO A MORTAL SUCH AS HE."
YOU SAYIN' NONE OF THIS IS THE REAL DEAL?
THE WHOLE OF BATTLEWORLD IS JUST A BIG LOAD OF BALONEY?
NO. IT'S REAL. IT'S AS REAL AS ANYTHING.
IT'S JUST NOT REALITY AS IT SHOULD BE.
DOOM CONVINCED YOU TO LIVE ON YOUR KNEES. EVERY DAY OF THIS LIFE, HE'S BEATEN YOU AS YOU LIE THERE.
THIS IS A PAINFUL, HEARTLESS TRUTH. AND IT BEGS ONE QUESTION: ARE YOU JUST GOING TO DIE HERE...

RRRRRRRRUMBLEE
"...OR ARE YOU GOING TO STAND UP?"



07

BEYOND

THE PROPHET EMERGED FROM THE GREAT WASTE--APPEARING FROM NOTHING.
A CAUSE FULLY FORMED. AN IDEA GIVEN SHAPE.
THIS DOOM IS NO GOD.
AND IF HE IS NO GOD, THEN WHY SUFFER UNDER HIS HAND? WHY SUBMIT TO HIS RULE?
THE PROPHET'S WORDS WERE FIRE.
HE SPOKE OF LIBERTY, AND THE PEOPLE PULLED DOWN THEIR IDOLS.
HE SHOUTED FREEDOM, AND THE PEOPLE RAISED UP ARMS.
HE MARCHED HIS ARMY TO CASTLE DOOM TO CAST OUT GOD HIMSELF.
IT WAS PROVIDENCE PROVIDING THE PERFECT MAN AT THE PERFECT TIME. BUT WHO IS THIS GREAT CATALYST?
WHO IS THIS PROPHET?

IT'S ME, YOU IDIOTS.
MAXIMUS!
"YOU FOLLOWED ME HERE TO CERTAIN DOOM.
"TO THE VERY END OF ALL THAT IS. AND IT'S GOING TO BE SO... MUCH...FUN."

THE ARMIES OF YOUR KINGDOMS GATHER TO REPEL THE ARMY OF THE PROPHET, MY LORD.
IF YOU WANT--IF YOU WISH IT--I WILL HURRY NOW TO JOIN YOUR LOYALISTS.
NO, SWAN...
AS, LIKE MYSELF, I FEAR THAT ONCE AMONG THOSE WHO TAKE MY GRACE FOR GRANTED, YOU WOULD LOSE YOURSELF TO ANGER.
SO WE WILL WATCH FROM HERE...
...AS I SIT IN JUDGMENT OF THOSE WHO DARE STAND AGAINST ME.
NO NEED TO TAKE IT PERSONALLY, VICTOR. IT'S WHAT FREE PEOPLE ALWAYS DO WHEN FACED WITH AUTHORITY. YOU CAN'T FIGHT HOW THINGS ARE, MY LOVE.
I'M CONFIDENT THIS WILL END NO DIFFERENTLY THAN ALL THE OTHER TIMES.
YOU'RE WRONG, MOM. THIS FEELS DIFFERENT.
THIS IS *SOMETHING MORE.*
YES.
SUMMON MY THORS.

PROJECT 42.
Witness, Richards...a sweet symphony...
...orchestrated by me to perfection--Maximus and his army have engaged the forces of Doom.
With one hand we distract them, while with the other...
...WE SLIP A SMALL TEAM--US--PAST THEM TO STEAL THE MOST VALUABLE THING THAT'S LEFT OF THE MULTIVERSE.
ARE YOU SURE YOU CAN PILOT US IN THERE UNDETECTED, STAR-LORD?
ABSOLUTELY.
PROBABLY.
THERE'S A DECENT CHANCE.
Then all we need is for the battle to last long enough to obscure our arrival and departure.
Call me a pessimist, but I don't think the frothy mob of Maximus is going to take us the distance.
Time for revelations, Reed...
Unleash those secret plans of yours.
ACTUALLY, THEY'RE NOT MY PLANS AT ALL.
BE-DOOP
CAN YOU HEAR ME, T'CHALLA?

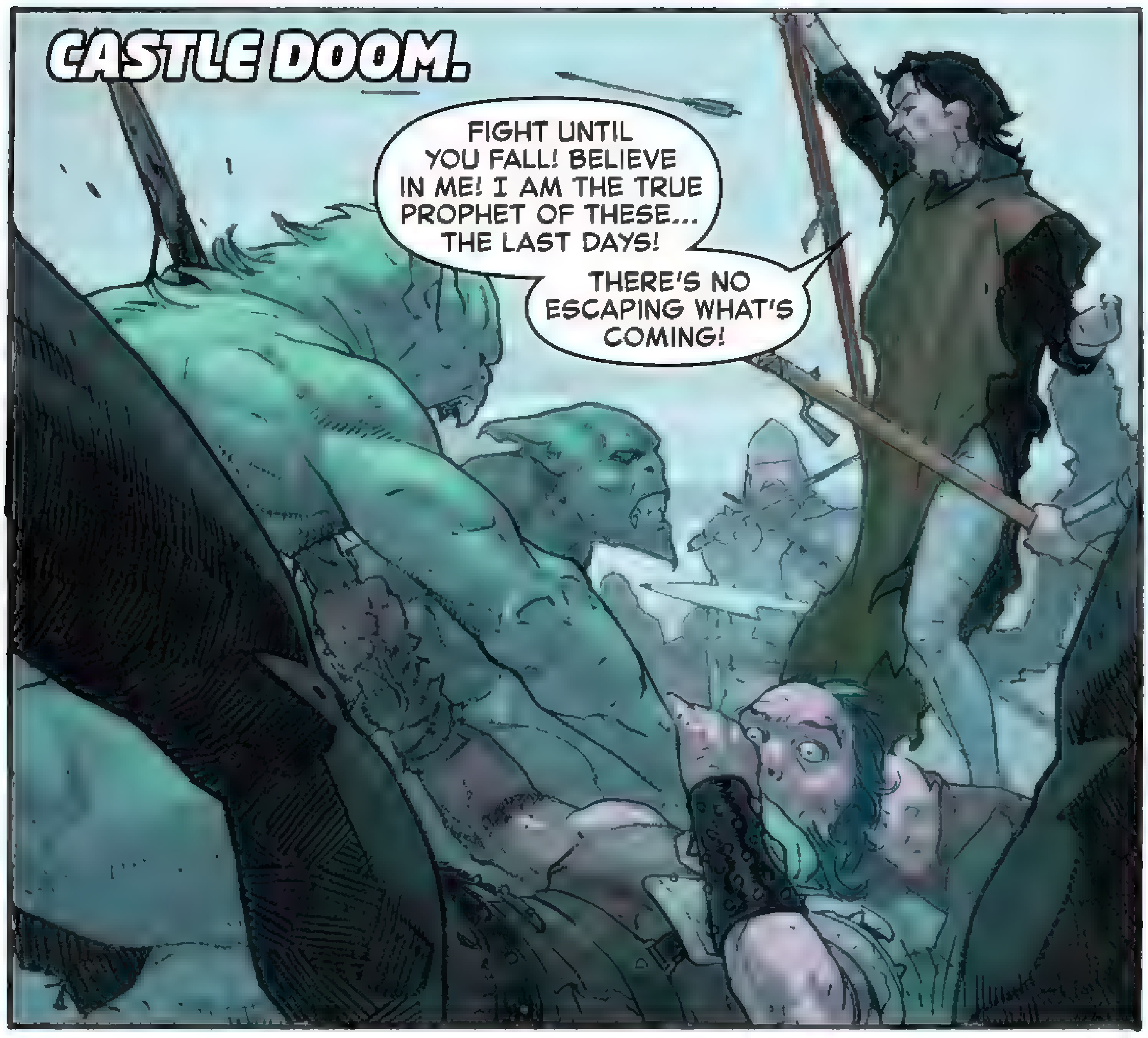
LOUD AND CLEAR, REED. LIKE YOU'RE STANDING RIGHT HERE BESIDE ME.
IT'S STARTED?
YES. WE'RE PREPARING TO LEAVE NOW. ARE YOU READY?
ALMOST.
I WANTED TO WAIT UNTIL THE LAST POSSIBLE MINUTE. THIS ISN'T REALLY SOMETHING YOU CAN PUT BACK IN THE BOX.
WELL, GOOD LUCK.
YOU TOO, REED.
LISTEN, T'CHALLA, IF THIS DOESN'T WORK... IF WE *FAIL*, THEN THAT WILL MEAN THIS IS THE END, AND...
AND...
AND THEN I WILL SEE YOU ON THE OTHER SIDE, MY FRIEND.
TRUST ME. DEATH IS JUST A DIFFERENT KIND OF JOURNEY...
...TO THE LAND THAT I AM KING OF.
UNTIL THEN, REED.
GOOD LUCK.
BE-DOOP
YOU KNOW, JUST THEN...
...I NEARLY STARTED CRYING.

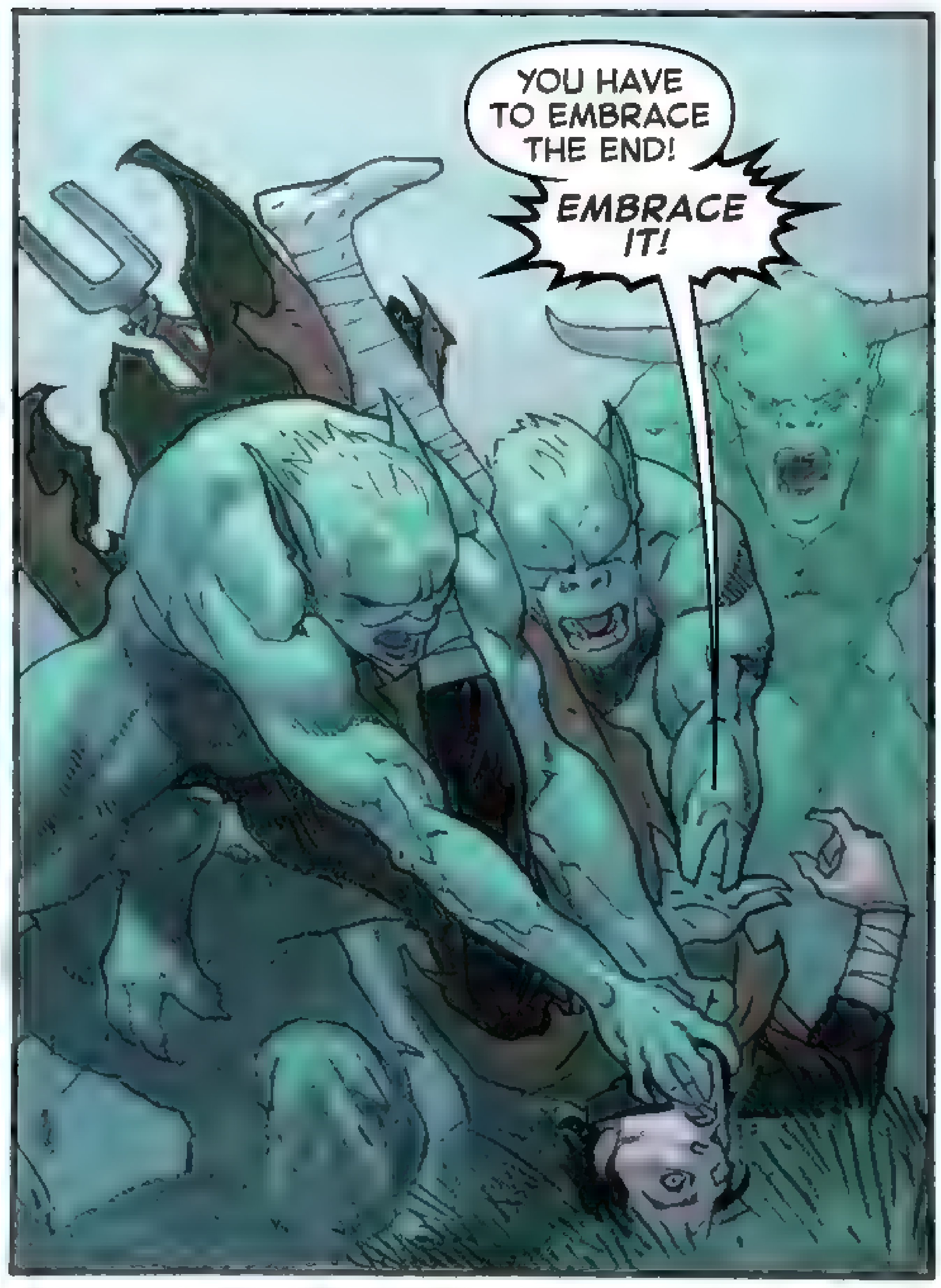
THERE WERE ALMOST ACTUAL TEARS.
THE SHIELD.
STAY WITH THE COURAGEOUS.
I'M GOING DOWN.
HMM. IT WASN'T LIKE I WAS VOLUNTEERING TO GO, T'CHALLA.
AFTER ALL, I THOUGHT WE WERE CHARGING INTO BATTLE WITH STEPHEN STRANGE'S SECRET ARSENAL...
HONESTLY, I DON'T EVEN KNOW WHAT WE'RE DOING HERE.
AND ONE OTHER THING...THIS *"KING OF THE DEAD"* APPELLATION YOU'VE BEEN SPOUTING SINCE BEFORE OUR FIRST INCURSION...
...IT'S AMBIGUOUS, AND, FRANKLY...
...DON'T YOU THINK IT'S GETTING A BIT OLD?
NO.
I DON'T.

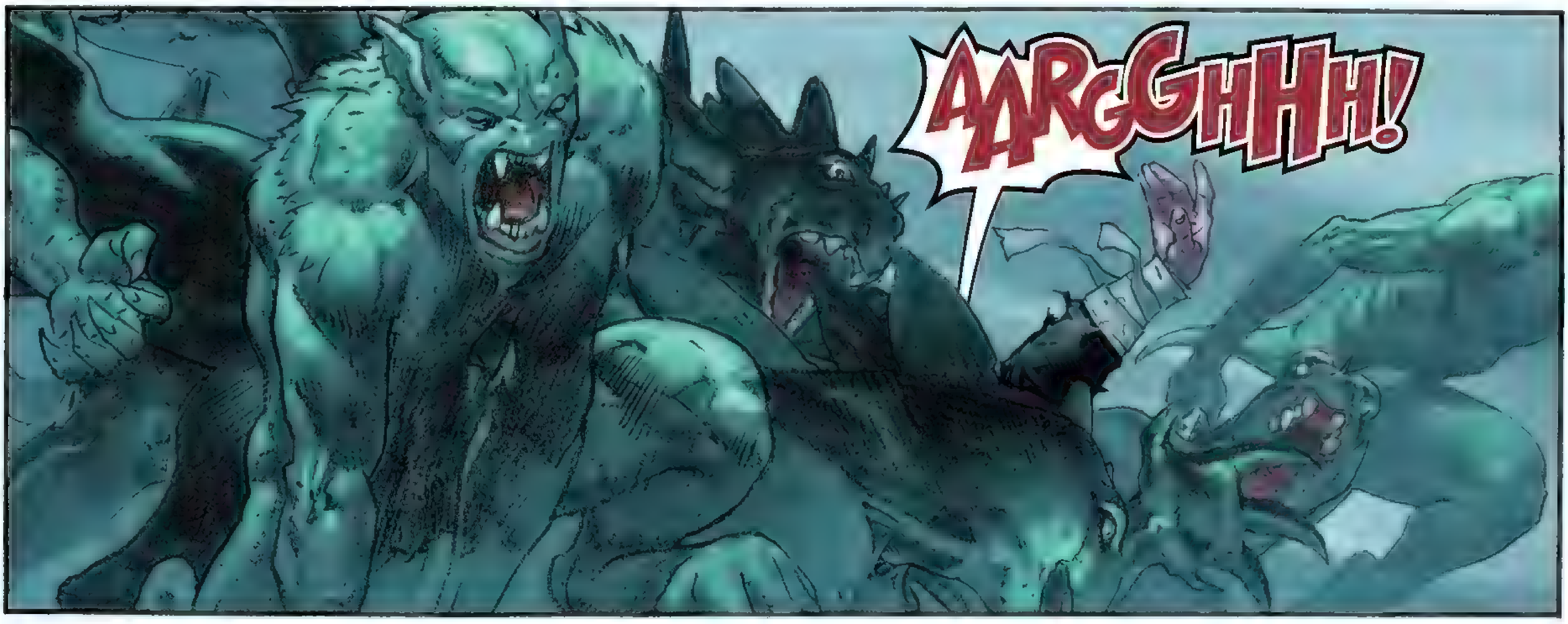
BABOOOOMM
OKAY...
EXACTLY *WHAT* IS ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THAT WALL?
THE DEAD.

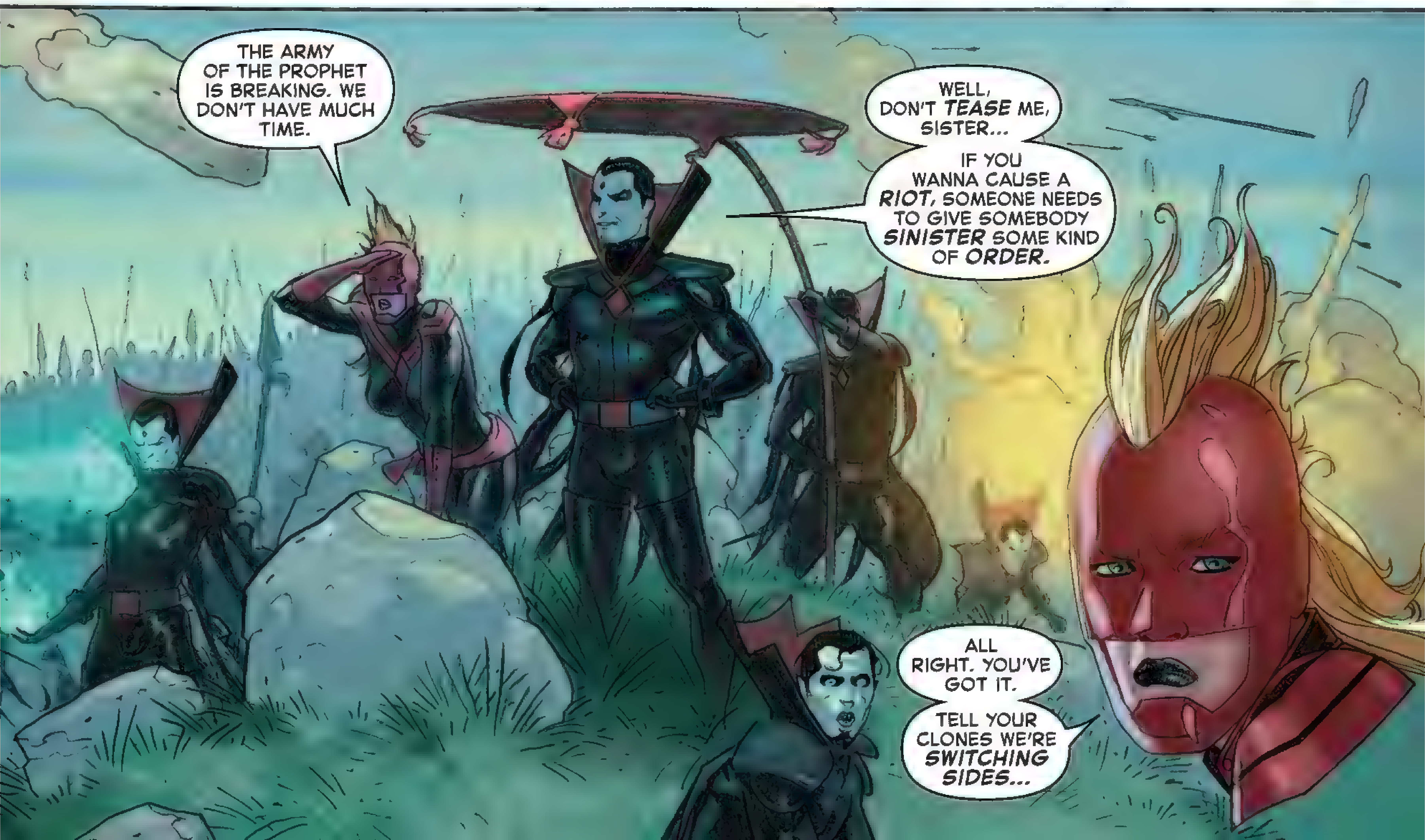
SSSKIN'SSS ALL ITCHY...
IT'SSS BETTER WHEN YOU KNEEL.
LISTEN TO ME!
IT IS SAID THAT ONE WHO TRAVELS THROUGH A ***SIEGE COURAGEOUS*** IS GRANTED A NEW LIFE.
A *SECOND CHANCE.*
AN OPPORTUNITY TO BE SOMETHING *BETTER.* SOMETHING *MORE.*
COME WITH ME AND WE WILL TRAVEL THROUGH IT TO THE GREATEST BATTLE ANY WORLD HAS EVER SEEN.
TOGETHER WE WILL FACE A FALSE GOD AND STRIKE HIM DOWN.
DO YOU KNOW WHAT THEY CALL WHAT IS WAITING FOR YOU ON THE OTHER SIDE?
GLORY AND HONOR.
UHHHH. HOLD ON A MINUTE...
I FEEL TOTALLY COMPELLED TO FOLLOW YOU, BUT, *UH,* MAYBE WE SSSHOULD TALK ABOUT THISSS...
I MEAN...WE HAVE IT PRETTY GOOD HERE.
YESSS. IT'S SSSURPRISSING. I FIND I QUITE LIKE MURDER AND EATING SSSOFT, SSSQUISSHY THINGSSS.
IT'S LIKE... LIKE PEANUT BUTTER AND BRAINSSS...

PUT THEM TOGETHER AND YOU JUST LOVE IT SSSO MUCH THA--
THUNK
WHY THE HESITATION, MONSTERS?
YOUR *KING* IS WAITING FOR AN ANSWER.
UHHH... GLORY AND HONOR?
GLORY AND HONOR!
GLORY AND HONOR!
GLORY AND HONOR!
GLORY AND HONOR!
GLORY AND HONOR!
GLORY AND HONOR!
GLORY AND HONOR!
GLORY AND HONOR!
GLORY AND HONOR!


CASTLE DOOM.
FIGHT UNTIL YOU FALL! BELIEVE IN ME! I AM THE TRUE PROPHET OF THESE... THE LAST DAYS!
THERE'S NO ESCAPING WHAT'S COMING!


YOU HAVE TO EMBRACE THE END!
EMBRACE IT!


AARGGHHH!


THE ARMY OF THE PROPHET IS BREAKING. WE DON'T HAVE MUCH TIME.
WELL, DON'T *TEASE* ME, SISTER...
IF YOU WANNA CAUSE A *RIOT*, SOMEONE NEEDS TO GIVE SOMEBODY *SINISTER* SOME KIND OF *ORDER*.
ALL RIGHT. YOU'VE GOT IT.
TELL YOUR CLONES WE'RE *SWITCHING SIDES*...

"...TIME TO TURN ON THE GOBLIN QUEEN'S ARMY."
BOOOMMM
BARONESS! LOOK!
THE ARMY OF SINISTER!
WHAT IS THE MEANING OF THIS?
WHAMM
THIS?
THIS IS ABOUT BETRAYAL.
YOU... YOU'VE *ALWAYS* HAD THE HEART OF A TRAITOR, SINISTER.
BUT WHY BETRAY US *NOW?*
OH, COME NOW, BARONESS...I DON'T HAVE A HEART AT ALL!
AS FOR WHY WE ATTACKED YOU, ***BETRAYAL*** IS THE GOOD CAPTAIN MARVEL'S SCHTICK... I HAVE ***MUCH BETTER REASONS...***

LIKE I JUST... CAN'T... STAND THAT TACKY OUTFIT YOU'RE WEARING!
CRACK
FEEL BETTER?
YOU HAVE NO IDEA.
ZZAAK
OBVIOUSLY, SOMEONE DOESN'T APPRECIATE GOOD TASTE...
HURK!

BARON...
...APOCALYPSE WOULD LIKE A WORD.
ZZZAK
ZZZAK ZZZK
ZZZAK
THE FIELD OF WAR. A PLACE OF TRUE TESTING...
IT IS GOOD TO BE HERE AGAIN. TO EXALT THE FIT, TO PULL DOWN THE WEAK.
YOU'VE LOST YOUR HEAD ONCE AGAIN, SINISTER.
AS *YOU* HAVE LOST ALL SENSE OF DECORUM, BARON. TARDINESS--AS RUDE AS IT IS PETULANT...
...THOUGH IT SEEMS YOU ARE NOT THE *ONLY* LATE ARRIVAL.
HMM?
LOOK...

"...THE WORTHY."
DOOMGARD.
CITADEL OF THE THORS.
CHECK IT OUT.
THE THORS HAVE ARRIVED.
DOOMGARD IS HERE, VICTOR...
...BUT WHERE IS YOUR HOST?

THE GREAT HALL.
SSSSHE LIESSSSSS.
NO! THE NEWCOMER SPEAKS THE TRUTH ABOUT ALL-FATHER DOOM.
"IT'S THE TRUTH...
...AND IT'S TORN US ASUNDER!"
BOFF
BRAAARRR!

CAN YOU RISE?
I'LL DO MORE THAN THAT.
I AND SOME OTHERS WILL STAY AND HOLD THE HALL, WHILE YOU TAKE THE REST AND JOIN THE BATTLE BELOW.
WE WORTHY OUTNUMBER DOOM'S FAITHFUL.
AS IT SHOULD BE...
AS IT SHOULD BE...
BROTHERS! SISTERS! YOU KNOW IN YOUR HEARTS THAT MY WORDS ARE TRUE!
YOU HAVE BEEN DECEIVED. GOD DOOM IS NOT GREAT...HE IS NOT EVEN GOOD!
SO WHO WILL COME WITH ME AND DO BATTLE?
"WHO WILL COME WITH ME

"...SO THAT WE MIGHT SMITE GOD?"
WELL... THAT'S NOT RIGHT...
THE THORS ARE ATTACKING THE BARONS DEFENDING THE CASTLE!
WHY WOULD THEY DO THAT, VICTOR?
I AM BETRAYED.
AGAIN.

TIME OUT JUST LOOK HOW FAR I'VE FALLEN...
UNTIL NOW, I'VE BEEN A LOYAL SERVENT, *OF A SORT.* I'VE HAD MY MOMENTS--WE HAVE...SOME WERE GREATER THAN OTHERS, SURE, BUT ADD THEM ALL TOGETHER AND ONE COULD MAKE A CASE FOR LENIENCE.
SO WHAT DO YOU SAY, APOCALYPSE? A BARON'S PARDON FOR A FELLOW BARON?
SSQQQUUEEEEEE!
YOU DARE ASK ME FOR MERCY?
IF I, APOCALYPSE, MUST BOW BEFORE GOD DOOM, THEN THERE WILL BE NO QUARTER GIVEN TO TRAITORS SUCH AS YOU...
...OR ANY OF THE ONCE-WORTHY.
YOU CAN FALL NO FURTHER, SINISTER.
YOUR CONDITION CAN GET NO WORSE.
?
OH...
"...I THINK IT CAN."

"FOR THE MAESTRO IS HERE."
WORLDBREAKERS... GO!

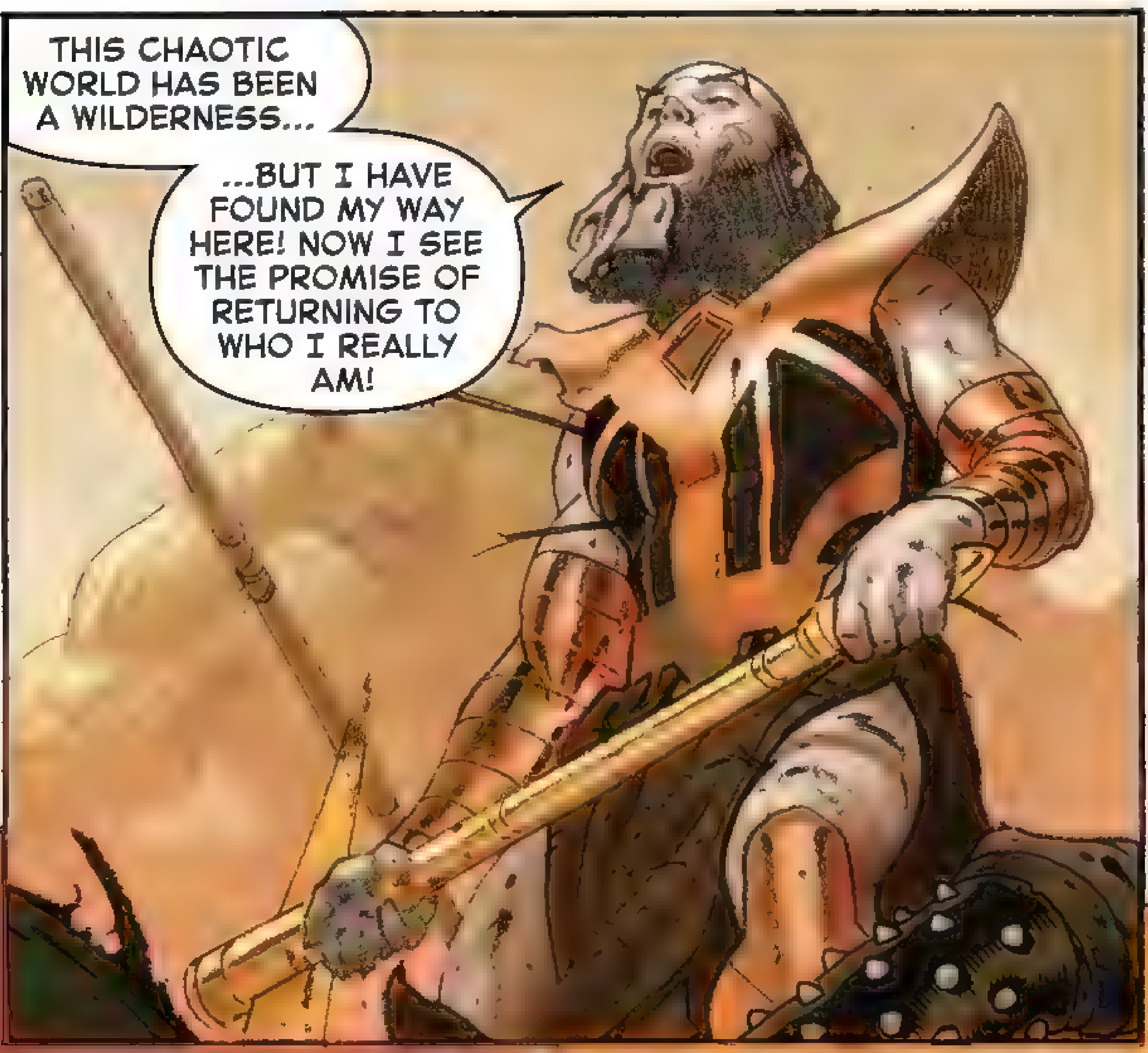
"BREAK THE WORLD."
SMASH!
SMASH!
SMASH!
SMASH!
SMASH!
SMASH!
SMASH!
SMASH!
SMASH!
SMASSHHH

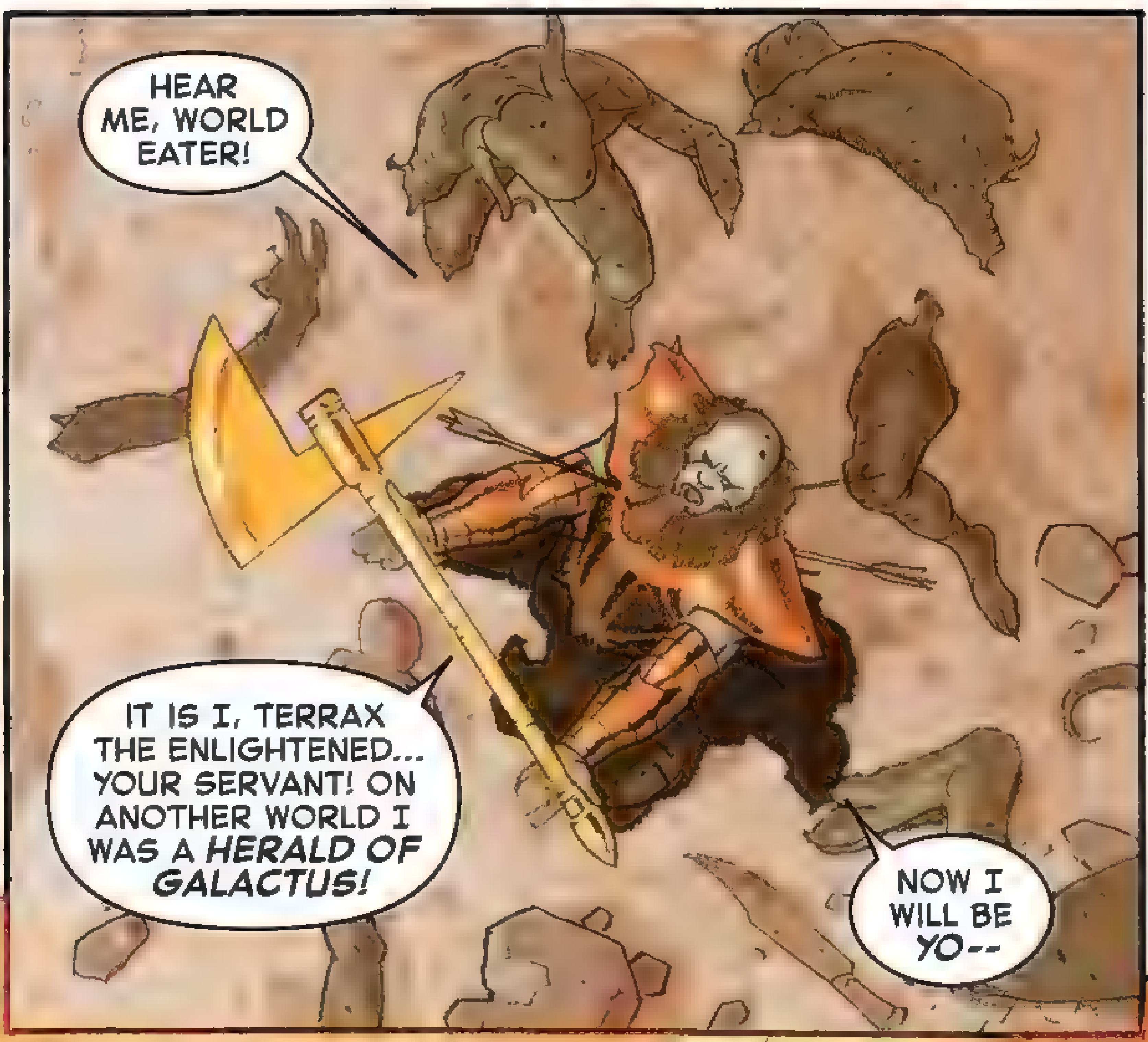
"WE'RE THIRTY KLICKS OUT."
ABOUT TO HIT THE BATTLE-GROUND...
SO I'M GONNA NEED A FINAL DESTINATION LOCK.

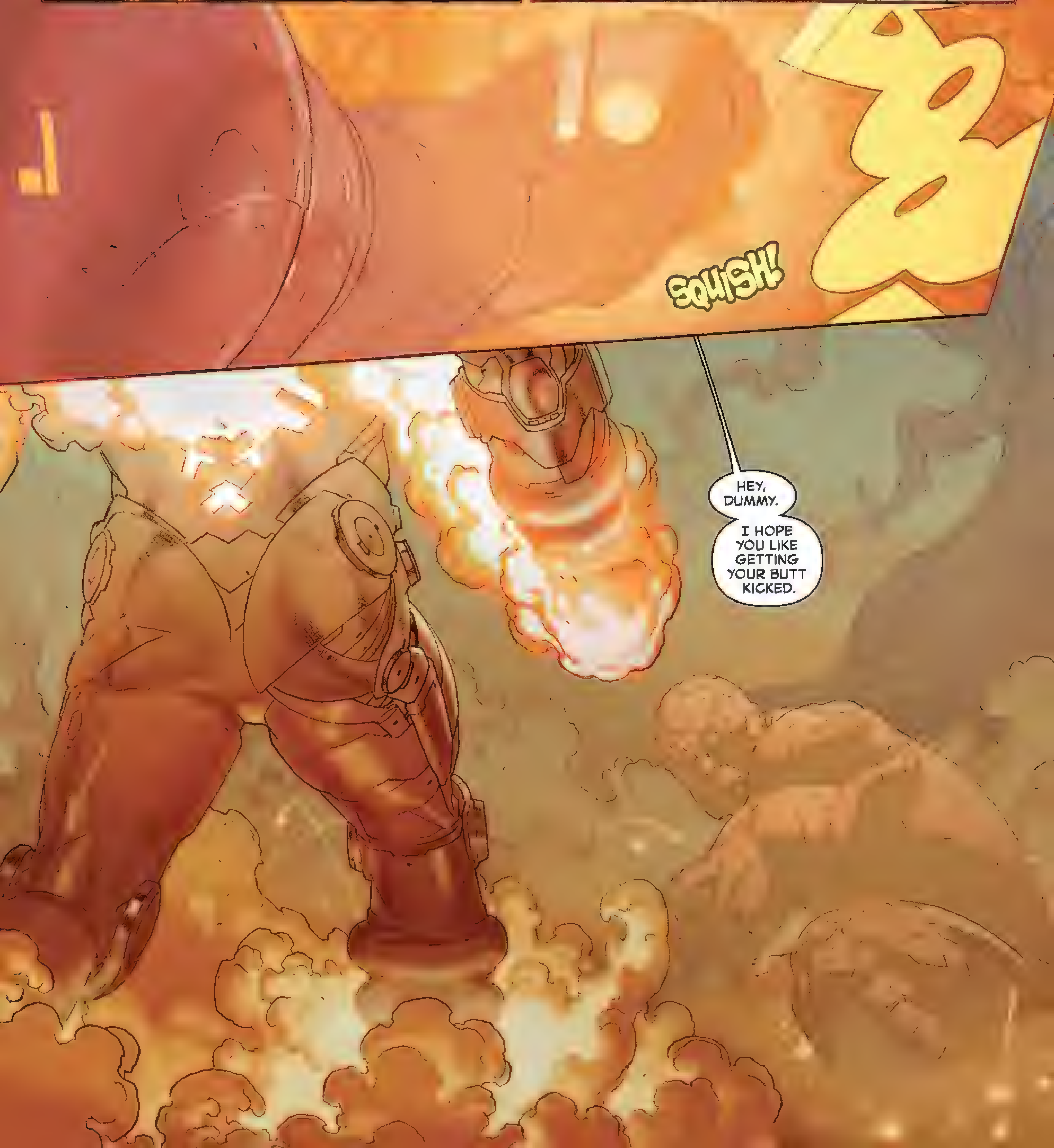
READINGS CONFIRM WHAT SPIDER-MAN REPORTED. THEY'VE ALSO REMAINED CONSTANT UP TO THIS VERY MINUTE...
OUR TARGET IS CASTLE DOOM. PLEASE GET US THERE QUICKLY, MISTER QUILL...AND UNSCATHED.
OH...NO PROBLEM.
I'M *PLENTY* FAST...AND I SURE DON'T GET SHOT DOWN.
RARRRRR!
WHAT THE--?!
IT SEEMS THERE'S A *HULK* ON YOUR SHIP, MISTER QUILL. I SUGGEST YOU GET IT OFF.
NOW!
TAKING EVASIVE ACTION!
BUT, UH...SLIGHT PROBLEM.
WE'VE LOST OUR AFT ENGINES...
REMEMBER ME PROMISING TO GET US THERE IN ONE PIECE?
YES!
YOU MIGHT WANT TO HOLD ONTO SOMETHING!

CAN YOU SEE ME FROM YOUR CASTLE, DOOM?
FOR THE MAESTRO IS HERE. AND I HAVE BROUGHT THE ENTIRE GREEN NORTH TO YOUR LANDS.
I HAVE WAITED A LONG TIME FOR THIS DAY! AND WHEN I AM DONE WITH THE ARMIES BELOW, I AM COMING FOR YOU, GOD...
I AM--
HUH?
WHAT IS THIS?
WELL, PAL, CLEARLY IMMA GIANT ORANGE GUY ON HIS WAY TO SETTLE OLD SCORES...
FABOOOOM
AND YOU LOOK LIKE SOMETHIN' IN MY WAY.
LOOK! THE MAESTRO'S SHIP IS COMING DOWN!
RUN!
ALAS, I CANNOT...
HOW EMBARRASSING.

OH, BEN.
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
BOOM
AN *EXPLOSION!*
THE REBELS HAVE REACHED THE CASTLE!
NO. WE WOULD KNOW IF THE LOWER LEVELS HAD BEEN BREACHED. THAT MUST HAVE BEEN SOMETHING ELSE.
BLACK SWAN, WOULD YOU...?
OF COURSE, MY LORD.
I'LL BE RIGHT BACK.
WHAT ABOUT BEN, VICTOR?
WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO ABOUT--
I THINK IT'S TOO LATE, MOM.


THIS CHAOTIC WORLD HAS BEEN A WILDERNESS...
...BUT I HAVE FOUND MY WAY HERE! NOW I SEE THE PROMISE OF RETURNING TO WHO I REALLY AM!


HEAR ME, WORLD EATER!
IT IS I, TERRAX THE ENLIGHTENED... YOUR SERVANT! ON ANOTHER WORLD I WAS A *HERALD OF GALACTUS!*
NOW I WILL BE *YO--*


SQUISH!
HEY, DUMMY.
I HOPE YOU LIKE GETTING YOUR BUTT KICKED.

Not what was promised, but any port in a storm, I suppose...
Our planned exit *does* however require a proper egress.
SO FIGURE SOMETHING OUT.
I'VE REACQUIRED A SIGNAL LOCK...
IT'S THIS WAY. COME ON.
You.
Stay here. Fix that.
OH, SURE.
YOU REEDS GO RIGHT AHEAD...
WHEN YOU GET BACK, THE SHIP'LL BE GOOD TO GO AND READY TO FLY.
I'LL BE RIGHT HERE WAITING.
ALL ALONE IN THIS CREEPY-ASS CASTLE.

WANT TO SAVE YOURSELF SOME TROUBLE AND GIVE UP?
YOU *WISH,* SQUIRT.
TIME FOR BED.
THOOM
WHOOOAA!
FRANKLIN!
IT'S... IT'S LIKE A NIGHTMARE, VICTOR...
WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR?!
PUT AN END TO THIS!
I WILL... BUT NOT JUST YET.
GRIMM WAS THE SHIELD...AND IF THE SHIELD HAS FALLEN...
NICE PUNCH, BUT IT'S GONNA TAKE MORE THAN THAT-- MORE THAN JUST *YOU*--TO KNOCK ME OUT.
I'M TOUGHER THAN THAT.
WELL, THEN... I GOT BAD NEWS FOR YOU, SPORT...
THERE'S A WHOLE LOT MORE THAN JUST ME COMIN'.

ZZZZWWWoooooooooo
YES.
HERE THEY COME...
ZZZZWWW
oooooooo..o
"...THE ANNIHILATION HORDE."
ZZZZZZWWWoooo
ZIMM!
VICTOR?

WELL, YOU'VE DONE IT NOW.
DO YOU SEE THAT? GOD IS HERE-- MY *FATHER*--AND HE IS TOTALLY IN A BAD MOOD.
ZIMMM!
BOOM
AND SO AM I!
AARGHHHHH!
WAIT!
HOLD ON A SECOND...
YOU SAID HE'S YOUR FATHER...
YOU MEAN *DOOM?*
YEAH.

SO THAT MAKES YOU SUZIE'S KID?
YEAH. THAT'S ME.
FRANKLIN VON DOOM. NOW COME ON!
WELL, THIS JUST AIN'T GONNA HAVE A HAPPY ENDING, IS IT?
I KNOW WE'RE SUPPOSED TA FIGHT SOME MORE, BUT I AIN'T GONNA...
DON'T SEEM RIGHT NOW.
YOU...
...YOU DO WHATCHA GOTTA DO, KIDDO.
ZZZZAAAAK

OH, FRANKLIN... WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?
THIS... THIS IS SOME SHOW.
WHAT?!
IT'S SOME SHOW. THE SPECTACLE OF IT. LIKE THEATER.
VAL, WHAT ARE YOU--
DO YOU TRUST ME, MOM?
YES.
DO YOU LOVE ME MORE THAN ANYTHING?
NO MATTER WHAT?
YOU'RE MY DAUGHTER, VALERIA.
OF COURSE I DO.
THEN COME WITH ME...

"I NEED TO SHOW YOU SOMETHING."
WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU ARE DOING?
HUH?
WELL, RIGHT NOW I'M FIXING MY SHIP SO THAT WHEN MY PALS TAKE CARE OF THIS DOOM PERSON, WE CAN GET OUT OF HERE.
WHAT ARE *YOU* DOING?
SERVING MY GOD.
DESTROYING THOSE WHO STAND AGAINST HIM.
OH, I SEE...
YOU'RE ONE OF *THOSE* PEOPLE.
YOU THINK IF YOU SAY SCARY THINGS, I'M THE TYPE OF GUY WHO'D TAKE IT TO HEART. LIKE A SHEEP.
WELL, LISTEN UP, LADY...
I'M A BIG BAD WOLF WHO DOES BIG BAD THINGS. I DON'T NECESSARILY LIKE IT-- AND I CERTAINLY DON'T RELISH IT-- BUT I JUST CAN'T HELP MY NATURE.
SO WHY DON'T YOU GO ON BACK TO WHEREVER YOU CAME FROM, BEFORE THIS TURNS INTO ONE OF THOSE *"I TOLD YOU SO"* KINDA THINGS.
OKAY?

CRRASSHHH!
UNH!
SPLEEN. MY SPLEEN.
I'M SURE IT HURTS. FOR PAIN IS WHAT PROCEEDS THE GREAT COLLAPSE. WE ALL HAVE AN EXTINCTION CYCLE... THIS IS YOURS.
I AM A BLACK SWAN, AND *THIS* IS MY NATURE.
WHERE...WHERE'D YOU GO? A LITTLE PIECE SURVIVES THE END OF EVERYTHING AND THEN I GO AND LOSE...
AH! THERE YOU ARE.
OKAY. LAST CHANCE. IF YOU STOP RIGHT THERE--IF YOU STOP RIGHT NOW--I PROMISE I WON'T USE THIS.
ONE FINAL EMPTY THREAT? WHAT A FOOL YOU ARE.
YOU'RE BLEEDING ON MY GOD'S THRONE, LITTLE MAN. TIME TO DIE.
WELL...JUST REMEMBER...
I TOLD YOU SO...

SAY HELLO TO MY LITTLE FRIEND.
SLAM!
WHAT IS HAPPENING...?
WHAT IS THAT?
WAIT FOR IT.
I...
I...

I. AM. GROOT!
OH, BOY...
NOW THIS LOOKS LIKE TROUBLE.

A BATTLE IS RAGING AS FAR AS THE EYE CAN SEE AND NOW THE ***WORLD TREE*** IS WALKING AWAY FROM THE CASTLE!
I DON'T UNDERSTAND WHAT YOU'RE DOING, VAL, BUT ARE YOU ***SURE*** THIS IS WHAT WE--
LOOK, MOM. WHAT I'M SAYING IS THAT I THINK WE'VE BEEN LIED TO. FOR A VERY LONG TIME.
AND IT'S MUCH...WELL, IT'LL ALL MAKE SENSE WHEN YOU SEE IT.
SEE WHAT?
WHAT DAD'S BEEN HID--
OH.
VALERIA.
I SUPPOSE I SHOULDN'T BE SURPRISED.
HELLO, SUSAN.

ENOUGH!
THANOS.
DOOM.
YOU HAVE BROUGHT DOWN THE WALL--PIERCED THE SHIELD I SO CAREFULLY AND COSTLY BUILT--FOR WHAT?
THIS?

YOU WISH TO BE BARON OF THE WASTE?
VERY WELL. I WILL PERMIT YOU TO KEEP THE HORDE IF YOU CAN FIND YOUR FAITH.
CALL IT AN ENDOWMENT OF GOOD WILL. IF NOT...
YOU OFFER ME A GIFT. *ME?*
YOU FORGET, I WAS A GOD ONCE AS WELL. THE INFINITY GAUNTLET GAVE ME THAT POWER.
AND WHEN I WAS A GOD, I DID NOT USE THOSE POWERS AS A MORTAL WOULD...AS YOU HAVE...
SAVING WHAT YOU CAN.
NO, I WIELDED THEM AS A GOD *SHOULD.* IN *JUDGMENT* OF ALL LIVING THINGS.
YOU ARE A WEAK GOD. A *PRETENDER.*
IT IS *YOU* WHO SHOULD BOW BEFORE *ME.*
HMMM.
AND DO YOU HAVE AN INFINITY GAUNTLET NOW?
I DO NOT... YET I REMAIN *THANOS.* THE *GREAT TYRANT.*
AND FOR *YOU* THAT WILL BE ENOUGH.

HURK!
THAT APPEARS...
...UNTRUE.
ANNIHILUS...
SSSSSS.
I AM OWED PENANCE FOR THIS INDULGENCE.
YESSSSS, GOD. YESSSSS. WHATEVER YOU WISSSSH.
THERE ARE HERETICS ATTACKING MY CASTLE...

"I WANT YOU TO DEVOUR THEM FOR ME."
FWASSSSH!
WHAT NOW?
THERE'S SOMETHING COMING THROUGH!

NO.
GLORY AND HONOR!
GLORY AND HONOR!
BRAINsSs!
VICTOR!

YOUR REIGN IS OVER...
...AND IT ENDS WITH US.

GRAW!
"I SEE NOW..."
GATHERED ARMIES SPRAWLING TO THE HORIZON...
...ALL THIS STRUCTURED CHAOS, IT *REEKS* OF MACHINATION, T'CHALLA.
YOU ORCHESTRATED THIS, DIDN'T YOU?
HE HAD SOME HELP.
IT'S OVER, VICTOR. THIS MADNESS HAS TO END.
COME NOW, NAMOR. THE TWO OF YOU KNOW THE EXPECTATIONS THAT COME WITH BEING A RULER OF MEN. I'M SURE THAT IF YOU TRY, YOU CAN IMAGINE THE ONES A *GOD* MUST BE BURDENED WITH.
AND THAT HAS VALUE. YOU COULD JOIN ME. I WOULD RAISE A NEW ATLANTIS. I WOULD REMAKE WAKANDA.
I CAN GIVE YOU BACK EVERYTHING YOU'VE LOST.
AND WHAT GOOD WOULD THAT BE? A FAKE KINGDOM, ON A MANUFACTURED WORLD, SUBJECTED TO THE WHIMS OF A VAIN FRAUD...
YOU MAY HAVE THE POWER, VICTOR, BUT RAISING UP A NEW WAKANDA WOULD REQUIRE A VISION YOU JUST DON'T POSSESS.
AND *YOU* DO? IS THAT YOUR PLAN? YOU HAVE AN INFINITY GAUNTLET, AND WITH IT YOU'RE GOING TO TRY TO TAKE MY POWER FOR YOURSELF?
THE FALLEN KING OF WAKANDA...REBORN AS A MESSIAH?

ACTUALLY...
...I ALWAYS ASSUMED EVERYONE WOULD PREFER IT BE *ME* THIS TIME.
YOU THOUGHT WRONG.
GOODBYE, VICTOR.
NRRRRHHH...

KRSSHHH
IT CAN'T BE THAT EASY.
IT WON'T BE.
THAT.
HURT.

ZZZZAAKKK
ARRRRGGGHH!
BUT PAIN OFTEN BRINGS CLARITY, T'CHALLA.
I SEE YOU NOW.
YOU HAVE MY FULL ATTENTION.
GOOD.
THEN LET'S GET STARTED.
NO. LET US *FINISH* THIS...
...AND DO SO AS *GODS*...
"...ON THE EARTH.
"IN THE SKY.
"AND THE HEAVENS ABOVE."

YOU!
I REMEMBER YOU.
THAT CAN'T BE...
FROM WHAT I UNDERSTOOD, YOU DIDN'T KNOW WHO I WAS. WHAT I WAS.
DO YOU REALLY KNOW ME, SUSAN?
YES. I SAW YOUR FACE. THERE WAS A HOLOGRAM OF A BATTLE. YOU WERE FROM THAT SHIP, AND WERE FIGHTING THE THORS.
YOU PEOPLE *MURDERED* STEPHEN STRANGE.
ACTUALLY, MOM, I'M NOT SURE THAT'S WHAT--
OF COURSE. YOU KNOW ME FROM A PICTURE...
I HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH STEPHEN'S DEATH.
IT WAS DOOM.
YOU MEAN *GOD.*
I MEAN VICTOR.

"AND HOWEVER WELL-INTENTIONED THIS WORLD OF HIS IS, I MEAN TO PUT THINGS BACK THE WAY THEY ARE SUPPOSED TO BE.
"I MEAN TO END THIS CHARADE."
BECAUSE THIS IS NOT THE LIFE WE ARE SUPPOSED TO HAVE. NOT VAL. NOT ME.
AND CERTAINLY NOT YOU, SUSAN.
WHO... ARE YOU? REALLY?
MY NAME IS REED RICHARDS...
...AND I'M THE ONE WHO FIXES THINGS.

"Well...that didn't seem to go as expected.
"You know, they say you should never lie to the ones you love.
"Which is why I never lie to myself..."
You might want to consider that, Reed.
BE QUIET, MAKER. LISTEN... DO YOU HEAR THAT?
FIND THE QUIETEST PLACE IN THE WORLD--CALL IT HERE, CALL IT NOW--AND IF YOU CLOSE YOUR EYES AND LISTEN, YOU CAN HEAR THE SCREAMING.
DID YOU BRING ME SOMETHING TO EAT, REEDS?
I KNEW IT--BUT I WASN'T REALLY PREPARED FOR IT...
I'M SORRY, OWEN. I DON'T HAVE ANYTHING. HOW ARE YOU FEELING?
4
OH...I'M STARVING.

I'M SURE. AN INFINITE NUMBER OF MISSING MOUTHS NOT BEING FED WILL DO THAT. BUT I THINK WE CAN HELP.
So this is the battery?
The repository for all of Doom's power?
YES.
HELLO. HELLO. HELLO.
Hello, yourself.
And if you don't mind, please excuse us for a moment...
OKAY.
...I need to show Reed something.
WHAT IS--?
Oh, this is something I've been saving...
"You have no idea how hard it was to construct a device capable of creating a proper temporal bubble out of available materials on this retrograde world."

But I did it. I overcame, like we always do.
The interesting thing about all this is that it's not like conventional time travel.
It's not point-to-point, more like a closed temporal environment--so theoretically, one should only be able to move forward in time. To evolve.
However, you and I know differently, don't we? One actually can holistically visit the past.
It's a place of regret, and, my goodness, does it hurt.
I suppose I could apologize for this betrayal. But I saw you almost start crying up there with that woman who isn't your wife, and I just couldn't tolerate that kind of weakness.
What's the endgame here? Nostalgia for something that was never yours anyway? Really, Reed...
...who's interested in a weepy god?
ME.
Hmmmm?
HURK!
DID YOU KNOW THAT ONE ACTUALLY CAN HOLISTICALLY ENJOY PIZZA?
AND IT COMES IN SLICES!

REED.
REED.
REED.
YOU BETTER BUCK UP, COWBOY...
...HE'S GOING TO BE HERE SOON.
"AND THEN WE'RE GOING TO SEE WHAT'S WHAT."
AARGHHHH!
CRUNCH
AND NOW WE'RE DONE, T'CHALLA...AND WHAT HAVE YOU GAINED?
NOTHING.
CRACK
YES, YOU TESTED ME...
...REDUCED ME TO THIS--WANTON PHYSICAL VIOLENCE... BUT I REMAIN DOOM. AND YOU, SOMETHING BENEATH ME...

A LESSER. A FOOL WHO DOESN'T KNOW THAT HE'S BEATEN.
A SMILING FOOL WHO... WHO...
WAIT. WHY ARE YOU SMILING AT ME, T'CHALLA?
WHY ARE YOU--
B-BECAUSE WE WERE BIDING TIME...AND YOU'RE GOING TO...TO LOSE. ALL THIS...STRUCTURED CHAOS...
IT...IT...REEKS OF MACHINATION...
D-DOESN'T IT?
THIS IS ALL A DISTRACTION.

...
SUSAN. VALERIA...
WHAT ARE YOU--
IS IT TRUE, VICTOR?
IS ALL OF IT *TRUE?*
SUSAN, THERE ARE COMPLEXITIES BEYOND EVEN *MY* ABILITY TO EXPLAIN. IF YOU WILL JUST TRUST ME AS YOU ALWAYS HAVE--
LIKE STEPHEN TRUSTED YOU?
I'M SORRY, SUSAN. I TRIED.

RICHARDDSSS!
YOU HAD TO MEDDLE, DIDN'T YOU?
OF COURSE YOU DID. YOU'RE A ***MEDDLER.***
YOU HAVE SOME ***GREAT PLAN,*** I EXPECT. WHAT IS IT THIS TIME, REED? A NEW IDEA? A FRESH TAKE ON THE VERY OLD PROBLEM OF YOU AND I? HAVE YOU BUILT ANOTHER GREAT MACHINE?
NO. NOTHING LIKE THAT.
I JUST CAME TO CONVINCE OWEN THAT, PERHAPS, THERE'S A BETTER SOLUTION TO ALL THIS THAN YOU.
A BETTER SOLUTION...
YOUR ENTIRE LIFE, YOU HAVE BEEN DISTRACTED WITH THE MODERN CONCERNS SO PRECIOUS TO YOU AND YOUR KIND.
ETHICS, AND ORDER, AND SOCIETY... WHEN ALL THAT HAS EVER MATTERED WAS ***SURVIVAL.*** I SAVED ***MILLIONS,*** REED. OWEN SAVED ***MILLIONS.***
AND WHAT WAS IT YOU SAID WHEN YOU APPEARED HERE ON MY WORLD? ALL YOU COULD SAVE WAS YOURSELF.
YOU COULDN'T EVEN SAVE YOUR ***FAMILY.***
HOW DARE YOU.
SNAP
HAVEN'T YOU BEEN PAYING ATTENTION, REED? I DARE QUITE A BIT.
I DARED TO CHOOSE BETWEEN LIVING AND DYING FOR MILLIONS.
AND NOW I'LL CHOOSE FOR YOU AS WELL.

WHAT IS THIS?
MISTER REECE?
DID YOU BRING ME SOMETHING TO EAT, VICTOR?
NO.
THEN THAT MAKES THE TWO OF YOU *EQUAL*, DOESN'T IT?
FAIR'S FAIR, RIGHT?
RRRAAARRR
YOU WOULD DARE PUT YOUR HANDS ON ME?!
HAVEN'T YOU BEEN PAYING ATTENTION, VICTOR? I DARE QUITE A BIT, TOO.
THINGS AREN'T SO EASY WHEN YOU'RE NOT OMNIPOTENT, ARE THEY?

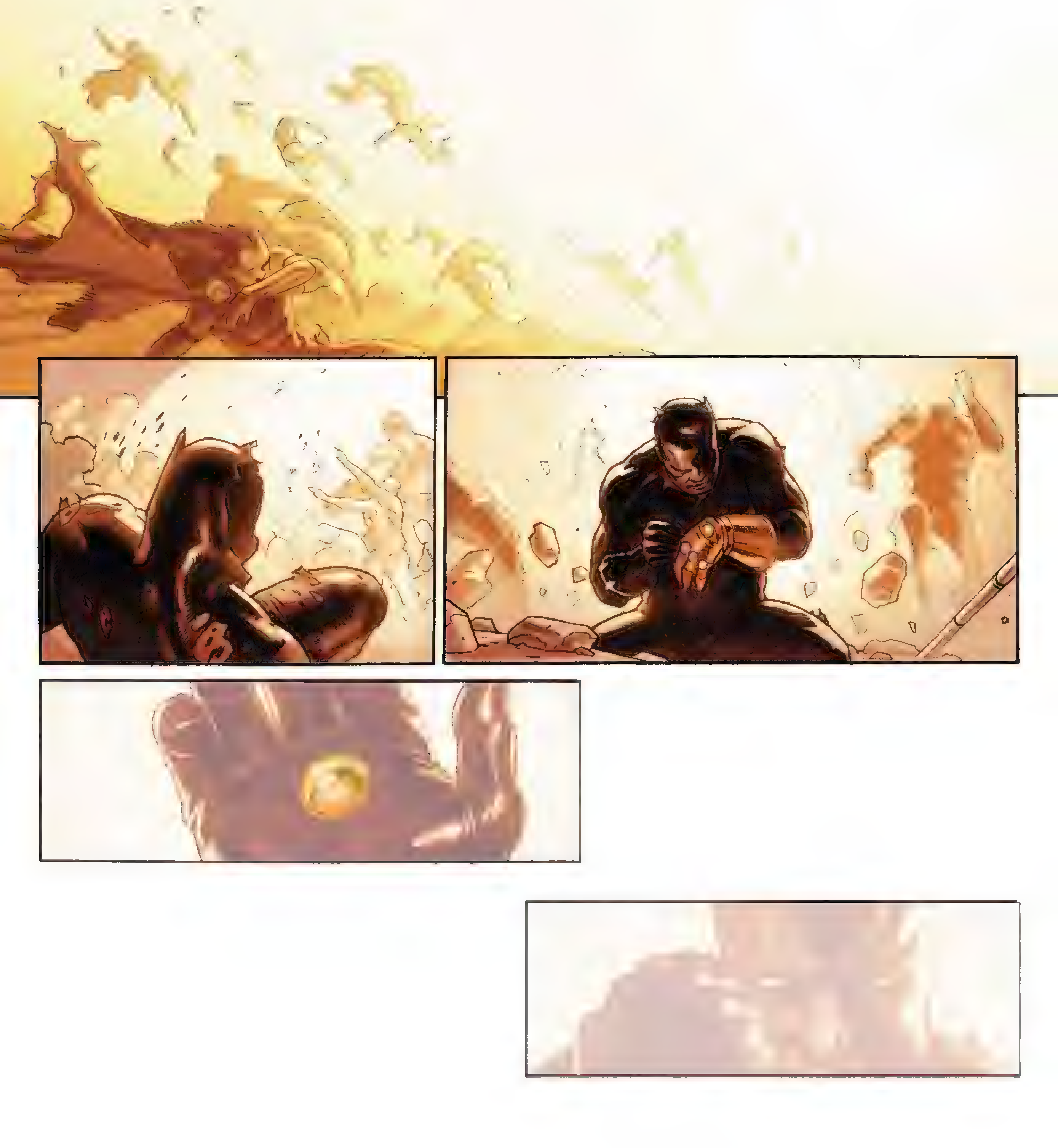
RRAAAAR!
EASY? YOU THINK ANY OF THIS HAS BEEN EASY?
YOU THINK POWER MAKES IMPOSSIBLE CHOICES MORE PALATABLE?
I HAVE ALWAYS HAD POWER, REED. NOTHING HAS EVER BEEN EASY.
YOU KNOW WHAT'S NOT EASY? HAVING YOUR LIFE ERASED BECAUSE SOMEONE WANTS TO INDULGE THEMSELVES.
YOU MADE YOURSELF GOD AND THE FIRST THING YOU DID WAS REPLACE ME.
THE FIRST THING I OFFERED WAS SALVATION.
YOU STOLE MY FAMILY.

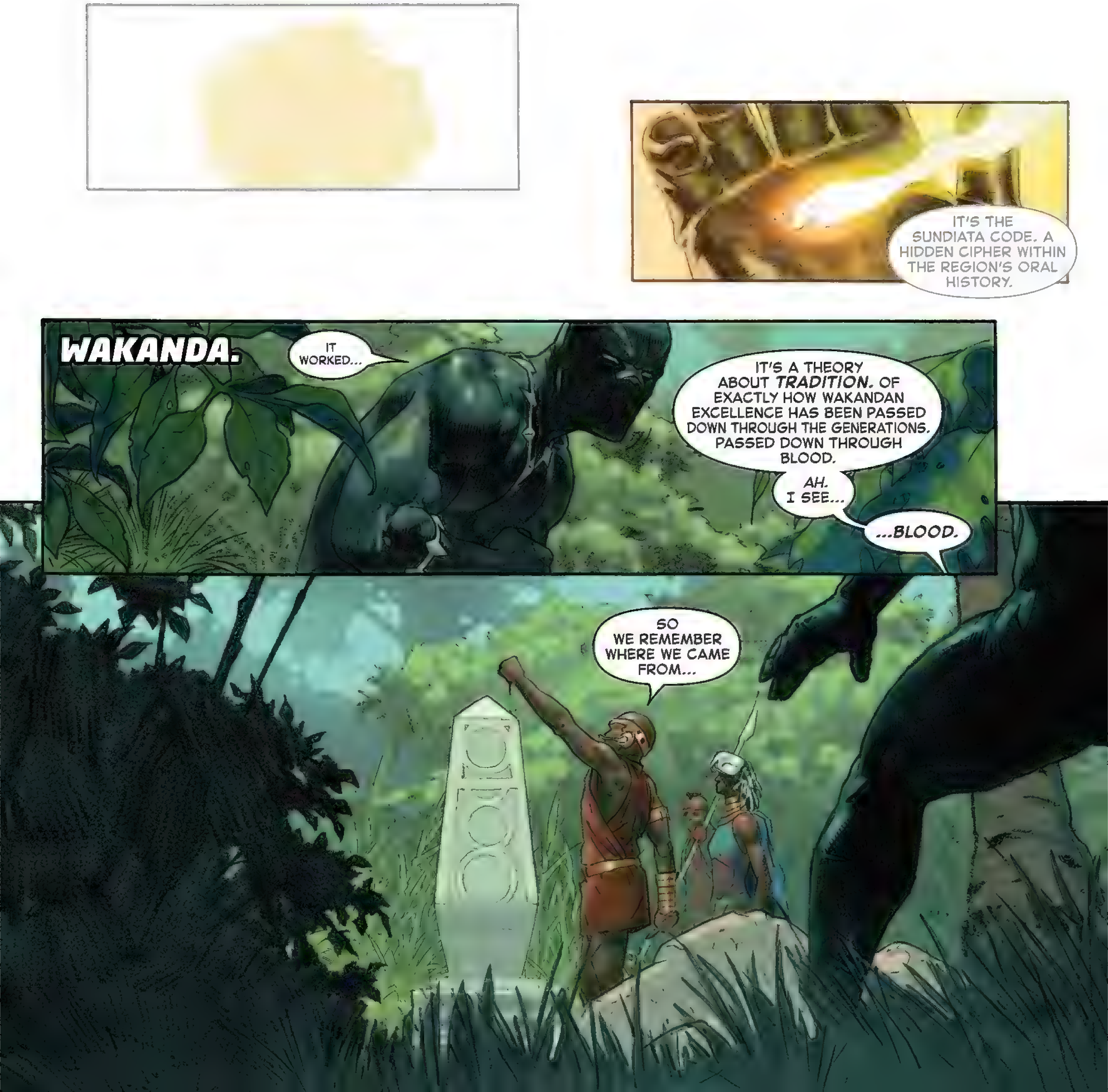
"YOU'RE WRONG. ***THEY*** CHOSE ***ME.***
"IF YOU WISH TO BELIEVE THAT THEY ONLY DID SO IN THE ABSENCE OF YOU, VERY WELL...
"...BUT THEY CHOSE. ***SHE*** CHOSE. SHE BELIEVED.
"ALL THAT I HAVE DONE--ALL OF THIS--AND YOU STILL GIVE ME NO CREDIT.
"CAN'T YOU ACCEPT THAT I HAVE DONE ***GOOD THINGS*** HERE?"
"I'M NOT BLIND, VICTOR. I DO ACCEPT IT...BUT YOU COULD HAVE DONE MORE.
"YOU CLOSED YOUR HANDS AROUND EVERYTHING THAT WAS LEFT AND CALLED IT ***YOURS.***
"YOU'RE SO AFRAID OF LOSING THE THINGS YOU'VE SAVED THAT YOU HOLD THEM TOO TIGHT.
"DON'T YOU SEE, VICTOR? A TREE IS JUST A SEED IN ITS REALIZED STATE."
"THIS IS WHAT ALWAYS CAUSES YOUR FALL, REED.
"ABANDONING THE GOOD BECAUSE YOU DESIRE THE PERFECT.
"I UNDERSTAND NOW--I KNOW WHAT THIS IS.
"IT'S THE SAME THING IT'S ALWAYS BEEN BETWEEN YOU AND I..."

...YOU THINK YOU ARE BETTER THAN I AM.
NO, VICTOR. YOU'RE WRONG.
I'VE ALWAYS BELIEVED YOU COULD BE BETTER THAN WHAT YOU ARE.
NO. I MEAN *NOW.*
THIS MOMENT.
FFSSSS
IF YOU HAD THIS POWER, YOU THINK YOU COULD HAVE SOLVED IT ALL--SOLVED EVERYTHING...
YOU THINK YOU COULD HAVE DONE *SO...MUCH... BETTER...*
DON'T YOU?
DON'T YOU?!

YES.
AND WE *BOTH* KNOW IT, DON'T WE?
YES. DAMN YOU...
NOW DIE!
OKAY, THEN.
IF YOU BOTH AGREE...
WAIT. NO...

BADADOOOOOOM




IT'S THE SUNDIATA CODE. A HIDDEN CIPHER WITHIN THE REGION'S ORAL HISTORY.
WAKANDA.
IT WORKED...
IT'S A THEORY ABOUT *TRADITION.* OF EXACTLY HOW WAKANDAN EXCELLENCE HAS BEEN PASSED DOWN THROUGH THE GENERATIONS. PASSED DOWN THROUGH BLOOD.
AH. I SEE...
...BLOOD.
SO WE REMEMBER WHERE WE CAME FROM...

...ON THE WAY TO *WHERE WE'RE GOING.*
FSSHHT
HUH!
STELLAR CARTOGRAPHY-- A MAP OF OUR SOLAR SYSTEM.
COUNT, KIMO...TWELVE PLANETS.
IT'S NOT OURS.
BUT IT IS WHERE YOU ARE HEADED.
MY KING!
YES.
CONGRATULATIONS, ***MAKERS.*** ON YOUR FEET--***STAND TALL.*** YOU ARE THE FINEST OF YOUR GENERATION.

KIMO, T'DORI... VERY, VERY WELL DONE.
N'KONO, YOUR FATHER'S GRANDFATHER WAS T'KONDA--THE BLACK PANTHER OF HIS TIME.
HE WAS CALLED *"THE WALL,"* AND NOW HIS SPIRIT, LIKE ALL OTHER PREVIOUS PANTHERS, LIVES WITHIN ME.
I FEEL HIS PRIDE WHEN I LOOK AT YOU.
PRIDE.
PRIDE, AND NOT *SHAME,* WHICH IS WHAT WE FEEL FOR THE WORLD *OUT THERE.*
GREAT SOCIETIES ARE CRUMBLING AROUND US, AND THE OLD MEN WHO RUN THEM ARE OUT OF IDEAS.
SO ALL EYES TURN TO YOU, ***OUR CHILDREN--*** TO BUILD US SOMETHING ***BETTER.***
THIS IS M23-671A. AN M-CLASS PLANET CIRCLING AN ORANGE DWARF 241 LIGHT-YEARS AWAY.
THE WEST HAS ABANDONED SPACE, AND THE EAST CRAWLS WHEN IT COULD RUN...AS A RESULT, WAKANDA NOW POSSESSES THE PREEMINENT SPACE PROGRAM ON THE PLANET...
BUT WE MUST DO MORE, GO FARTHER... TO SOMEWHERE NO HUMAN HAS EVER BEEN.
YOUR PRIZE, ***MAKERS...*** ARE ***THE STARS*** THEMSELVES.
THE STARS...OH, WOW...
I KNOW. YOU DREAM A THING, AND THE IDEA THAT IT COULD BECOME REAL...
AMAZING.
HEY...DO YOU GUYS FEEL THAT... LIKE LITTLE MICRO-TREMORS?
HRMPH. I'M NOT SEEING ANYTHING.
TURN AROUND...
LOOK UP.

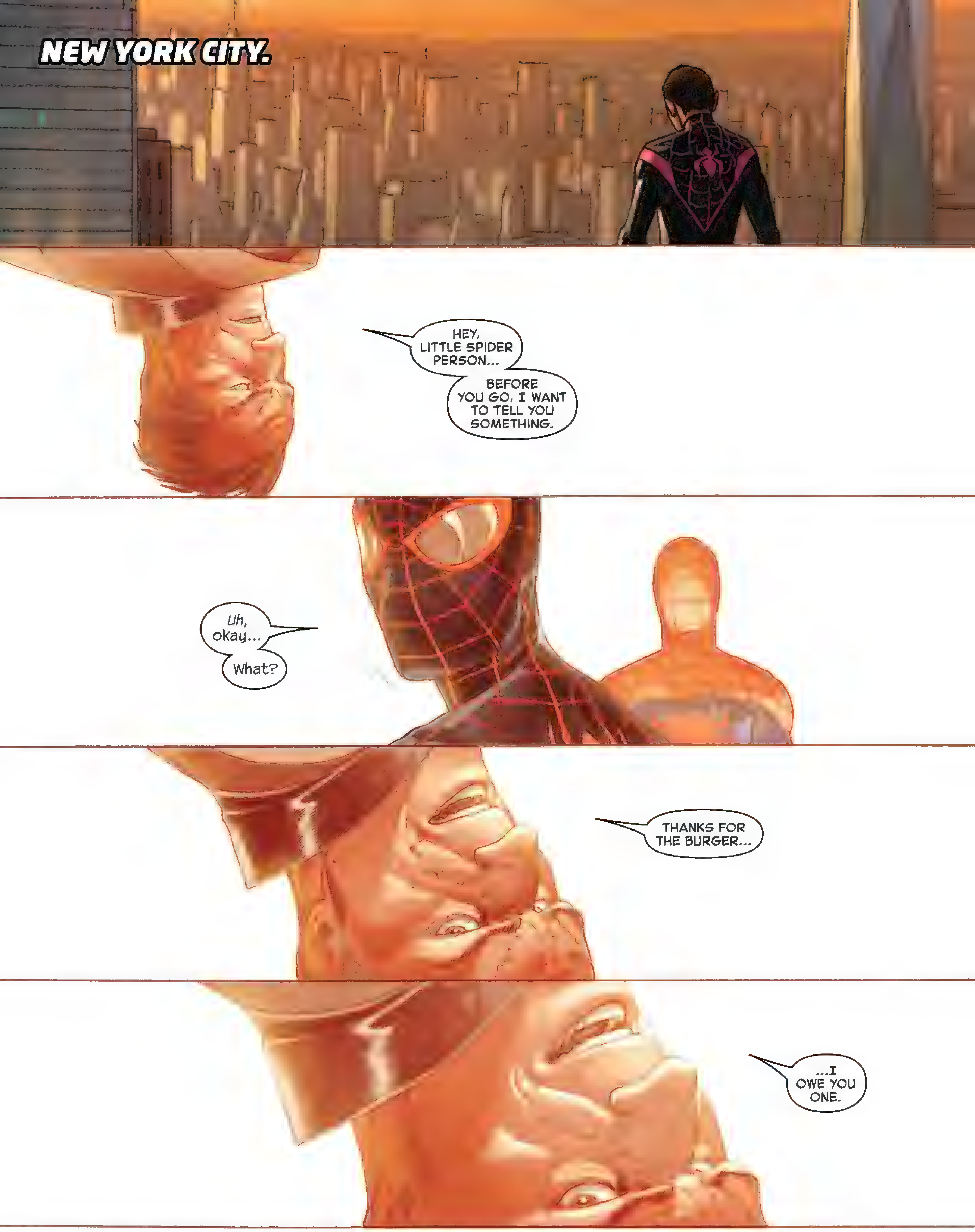
RRRRRRRRRRRRUUM
MMMMMBBLLE
WHAT IS THAT?
UH, IT'S A ROCKET, KIMO.
NO, HE MEANS WHAT *KIND.* THAT'S A SERIOUS PAYLOAD.
SOME PEOPLE SEE THE FUTURE SOONER THAN OTHERS, AND THEY HAVE THE PRIVILEGE OF SHOWING THE ENTIRE WORLD THE WAY.
THIS IS WHERE IT BEGINS. THAT ROCKET IS FOR EARTH COMMAND TO SUPPORT LOCAL SYSTEM TRAVEL. WE WILL DRAG MANKIND TO THE STARS ON THE BACK OF WAKANDAN SCIENCE.
STEP BY STEP...
AND THIS IS OUR VERY FIRST ONE...
OUR ALPHA FLIGHT.

EIGHT MONTHS LATER

◆

THE MARVEL UNIVERSE
THE PRIME EARTH

◆


NEW YORK CITY.
HEY, LITTLE SPIDER PERSON...
BEFORE YOU GO, I WANT TO TELL YOU SOMETHING.
Uh, okay...
What?
THANKS FOR THE BURGER...
...I OWE YOU ONE.

WHAT DID YOU TELL *YOUR MOM* YOU'D BE DOING, MILES?
STUDYING WITH A FRIEND.
SOMETHING LIKE THAT.
SO NOT A *TOTAL* LIE. MORE OF A HALF-TRUTH.
YOU EAT A SNACK?
UH-HUH.
YOU DO YOUR HOMEWORK?
YEAH.
YOU WANNA GO BEAT UP SOME BAD GUYS, SPIDER-MAN?

OH, HELL YES.

"EXPLAIN IT TO ME AGAIN."
OKAY, MOM...
DO YOU WANT THE COMPLICATED VERSION OR THE SUPER-COMPLICATED ONE?
I'D PREFER THE ONE THAT MAKES SENSE.
THINK YOU CAN DO THAT, DEAR?
SIGH
I CAN TRY. SO...
...OWEN OVER THERE IS THE KEY. HE'S KIND OF A HUMAN REPOSITORY OF UNLIMITED POWER.
AND THAT OMNIPOTENT POWER HAS TO BE DIRECTED--USED--BY AN INDIVIDUAL. IN THIS CASE, DAD.
AND THAT'S WHERE IT REALLY GETS INTERESTING, AS FRANKLIN IS A UNIVERSAL SHAPER. A DREAMER.

"SO HE HAS THESE IDEAS..."
FOR WORLDS?
FOR *UNIVERSES,* MOM. WHOLE UNIVERSES!
"THEN HE GIVES THEM TO DAD.
"AND DAD, USING ALL THAT POWER, SPINS THEM OFF INTO THEIR OWN REALITY.
"FINALLY, THEY SLICE OFF A BIT OF OWEN TO GO WITH IT. LIKE AN ANCHOR. BUT IT ALSO SERVES TO MAKE THE MOLECULE MAN BETTER. WHOLE.
"HEALING HIM."
OKAY.
AND THAT'S JUST THE START OF WHAT WE'RE DOING. ALL OF THIS HAS TO BE CATALOGUED. RECORDED.
EXPLORED.

SO WE'RE LIKE LEWIS AND CLARK, EXCEPT FOR ALL OF EXISTENCE.
WELL...SURE, MOM, IF LEWIS AND CLARK WERE ALSO CREATING THE LAND THEY WERE EXPLORING.
AND WERE SMARTER.
AND TOTALLY BETTER LOOKING.
OKAY. GOTTA WORK NOW.
DID YOU GUYS TALK ABOUT HOW WE SHOULD START, ALEX?
YEAH. AND AT FIRST, I THOUGHT THAT WE'D NEED TO START WITH THE UNDERLYING PHYSICS OF IT ALL. BUT THEN ONOME NOTICED THAT FRANKLIN'S ACTUALLY PLAYING PRETTY FAST AND LOOSE WITH THE ENTIRE SUPERSTRUCTURE...
...SO MY BEST GUESS RIGHT NOW? I THINK WE HAVE TO START WITH CREATION MYTHS. WHICH, OF COURSE, LEADS TO A TOTALLY SEPARATE SET OF [illegible]

HEY! REED!
YES?
I GOTTA TELL YOU, MISTER...
...THIS SURE IS SOMETHING.
CAN I ASK YOU A QUESTION, DAD?
OF COURSE.
ARE WE NOT SUPER HEROES ANYMORE?

WELL, HERE'S THE THING, FRANKLIN.
IT'S *DOING* GOOD THAT COUNTS, NOT NECESSARILY HOW YOU DO IT.
AND WHAT WE'RE DOING RIGHT NOW MATTERS--IT MIGHT BE THE MOST IMPORTANT THING EVER--AND THE BEST PART IS I GET TO DO IT WITH ALL OF YOU.
SO, NO...NO MORE SUPER HEROES FOR A WHILE, JUST SCIENCE.
AND NO MORE MISTER FANTASTIC, JUST DAD.
THAT DOESN'T SOUND TOO BAD, DOES IT?
NOPE.
GONNA PLAY NOW.
YOU KNOW...FOR NOT BEING A SUPER HERO, THAT WAS A PRETTY AMAZING FINAL ACT.
STILL...BEN. JOHNNY.
THEY CAN'T BE WITH US. THEY *SHOULDN'T* BE. THEIR ACT ISN'T ANYWHERE CLOSE TO BEING FINISHED.
STILL, IT WAS *ENOUGH,* REED.
THE LIFE RAFT BROKE AND I THOUGHT WE WERE DONE...
...AND THEN YOU SAVED US.
WELL...

"I HAD SOME HELP.
"AND THAT HELP BOUGHT ME JUST ENOUGH TIME TO FIX SO MANY THINGS I'VE BEEN WRONG ABOUT.
"I LEARNED THAT THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN LIVING AND DYING IS MANAGING FEAR.
"NOT BEING SO AFRAID OF LOSING THE THINGS YOU LOVE THAT YOU HOLD THEM TOO TIGHT.
"I USED TO BELIEVE IN UNIVERSAL CONTRACTION. ENTROPY AND THE END OF ALL THINGS.

"WELL, I'VE CHANGED MY MIND.
"I'M LETTING GO.
"BECAUSE NOW I BELIEVE IN EXPANSION. I BELIEVE WE ENDURE.
"DON'T YOU SEE?
"EVERYTHING LIVES."
THE END.

COVER GALLERY

AVENGERS #35 BY JIM CHEUNG
& JUSTIN PONSOR

NEW AVENGERS #24 BY GABRIELE DELL'OTTO

AVENGERS #36 BY STUART IMMONEN,
WADE VON GRAWBADGER & MARTE GRACIA

NEW AVENGERS #25 BY BUTCH GUICE & MATTHEW WILSON

AVENGERS #37 BY JAMIE McKELVIE

NEW AVENGERS #26 BY SALVADOR LARROCA
& PAUL MOUNTS

AVENGERS #38 BY SIMONE BIANCHI

NEW AVENGERS #27 BY SALVADOR LARROCA & PAUL MOUNTS

AVENGERS #39 BY ALAN DAVIS, MARK FARMER & BRAD ANDERSON

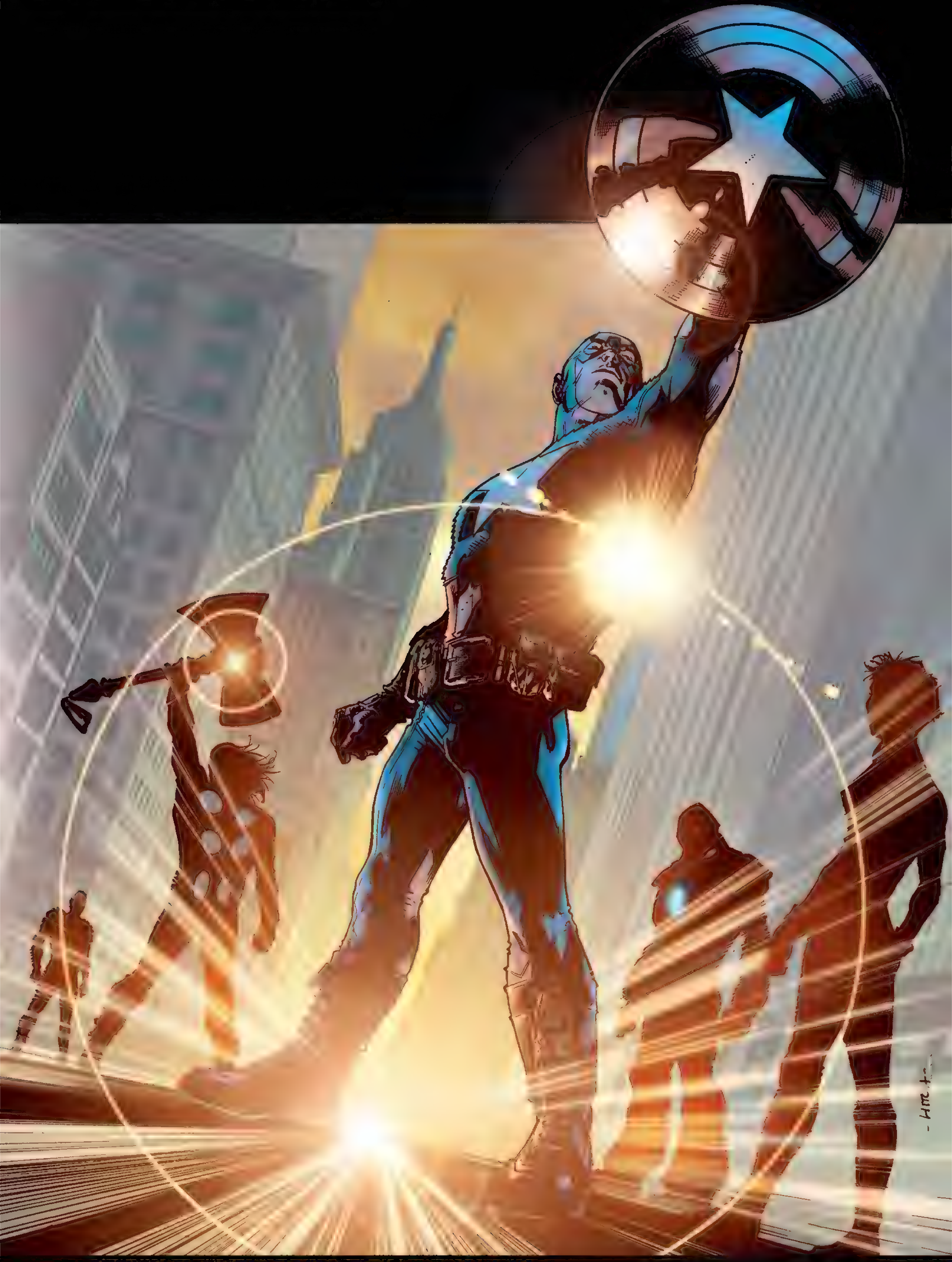
NEW AVENGERS #28 BY ALAN DAVIS, MARK FARMER & BRAD ANDERSON

AVENGERS #40 BY DALE KEOWN & JASON KEITH

Keown
+Keith

NEW AVENGERS #29 BY GABRIELE DELL'OTTO

AVENGERS #41 BY BRYAN HITCH & PAUL MOUNTS



NEW AVENGERS #30 BY ALAN DAVIS, MARK FARMER & MATTHEW WILSON

AVENGERS #42 BY SCOTT KOBLISH
& ROMULO FAJARDO JR.

KOBLISH
2014

NEW AVENGERS #31 BY INHYUK LEE

NEW AVENGERS #32 BY ADAM KUBERT & FRANK MARTIN

NEW AVENGERS #33 BY GABRIELE DELL'OTTO

AVENGERS #43 BY STEFANO CASELLI & SUNDER RAJ

AVENGERS #44 END OF AN ERA VARIANT BY
JIM CHEUNG, ROLAND PARIS & JUSTIN PONSOR

AVENGERS #44 BY DUSTIN WEAVER & JUSTIN PONSOR
DUSTIN WEAVER
J-Po

AVENGERS #35 & NEW AVENGERS #24
COMBINED VARIANTS BY AGUSTIN ALESSIO

AVENGERS #36 DEADPOOL VARIANT BY BOBBY RUBIO

RUBIO
after
FINCH
Hi
dave!

NEW AVENGERS #25 DEADPOOL VARIANT BY KEVIN NOWLAN

AVENGERS ASSEMBLE!
Kevin Nowlan
AFTER JACK KIRBY

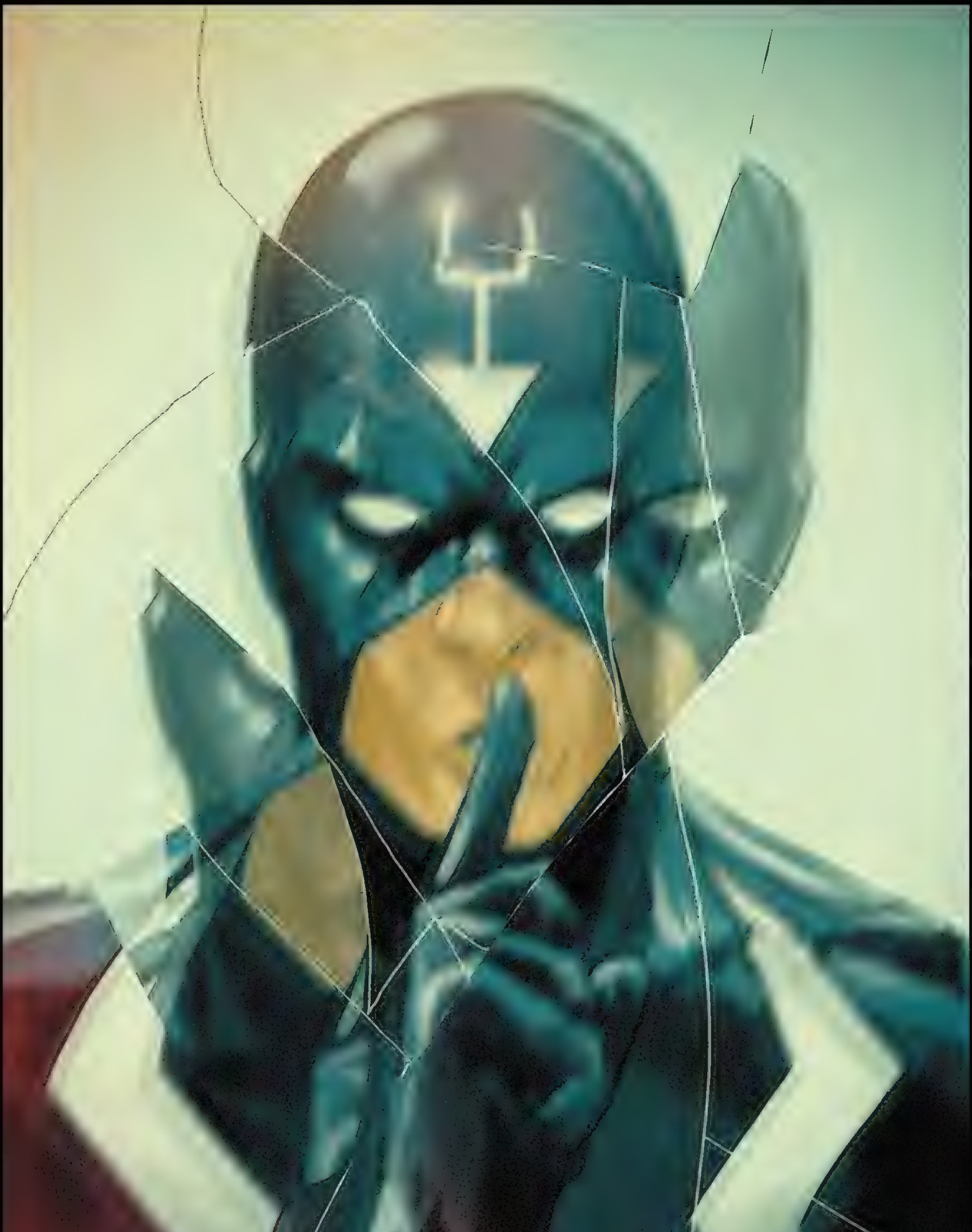
AVENGERS #40 WELCOME HOME VARIANT BY
SALVADOR LARROCA & ISRAEL SILVA

NEW AVENGERS #29 WELCOME HOME VARIANT BY
SALVADOR LARROCA & ISRAEL SILVA

AVENGERS #41 VARIANT BY PHIL NOTO

the Avengers

new avengers



AVENGERS #42 WOMEN OF MARVEL VARIANT BY
ELENA CASAGRANDE & RACHELLE ROSENBERG

NEW AVENGERS #31 WOMEN OF MARVEL VARIANT BY LAURA BRAGA

Laura Braga
2015-

AVENGERS #44 VARIANT BY TONY HARRIS

AVENGERS
HARRIS
'15

NEW AVENGERS #33 VARIANT BY TONY HARRIS

AVENGERS #44 & *NEW AVENGERS #33* COMBINED FINAL-ISSUE
VARIANTS BY JIM CHEUNG & JUSTIN PONSOR

FREE COMIC BOOK DAY 2015: SECRET WARS #0 BY ALEX ROSS

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SECRET WARS #7 BY ALEX ROSS

SECRET WARS #8 BY ALEX ROSS

SECRET WARS #9
BY ALEX ROSS

SECRET WARS #1 VARIANT BY
JIM CHEUNG & JUSTIN PONSOR

SECRET WARS #1 VARIANT BY ESAD RIBIĆ

SECRET WARS #2 VARIANT BY ESAD RIBIĆ

SECRET WARS #1-8 COMBINED VARIANTS BY SIMONE BIANCHI & SIMONE PERUZZI

SECRET WARS #1 VARIANT BY BUTCH GUICE & ANDY TROY

SECRET WARS #1 VARIANT BY AMANDA CONNER & PAUL MOUNTS

SECRET WARS #1 VARIANT BY CHIP ZDARSKY

AMAZING FANTASY
HULK
DAI
HAPPY END OF THE WORLD
STAR BEER

SECRET WARS #1 VARIANT BY SKOTTIE YOUNG

DOOM DOOM DOOM DOOM

SECRET WARS #2 VARIANT
BY YASMINE PUTRI

SECRET WARS #3 VARIANT BY TOMM COKER

SECRET WARS #3 VARIANT
BY MARGUERITE SAUVAGE

SECRET WARS #3 VARIANT BY BOB McLEOD & ANDY TROY

SECRET WARS #3 DR. GWENGE VARIANT
BY NICK BRADSHAW & JIM CAMPBELL

SECRET WARS #4 VARIANT
BY TOMM COKER

SECRET WARS #4 VARIANT BY ERICA HENDERSON

SECRET WARS #4 VARIANT BY JIM STARLIN,
ANDY SMITH & CHRIS SOTOMAYOR

STARLIN
A.Smith/15
(SOTO)

SECRET WARS #4 GWENGERS VARIANT
BY CHRIS SAMNEE & MATTHEW WILSON

SECRET WARS #5 VARIANT
BY TOMM COKER

SECRET WARS #5 VARIANT
BY SOPHIE CAMPBELL

SECRET WARS #5 VARIANT BY
PAT BRODERICK & CHRIS SOTOMAYOR

SECRET WARS #6 VARIANT BY GABRIELE DELL'OTTO

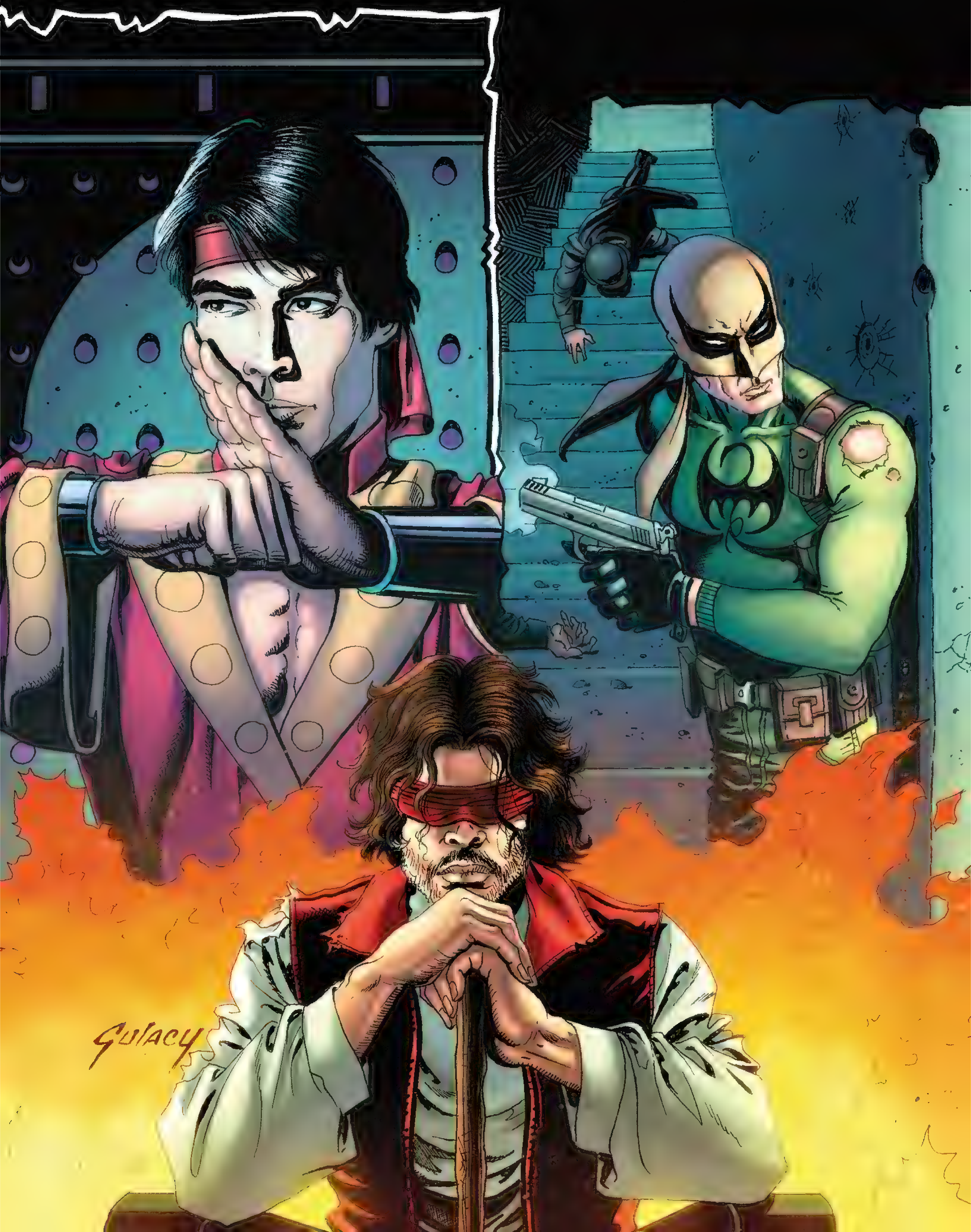
SECRET WARS #6 VARIANT BY BABS TARR

SECRET WARS #6 VARIANT BY RON FRENZ, SAL BUSCEMA & CHRIS SOTOMAYOR

SECRET WARS #7 VARIANT BY TOMM COKER

SECRET WARS #7 VARIANT
BY STACEY LEE

SECRET WARS #7 VARIANT BY PAUL GULACY & RACHELLE ROSENBERG



SECRET WARS #8 VARIANT
BY TOMM COKER

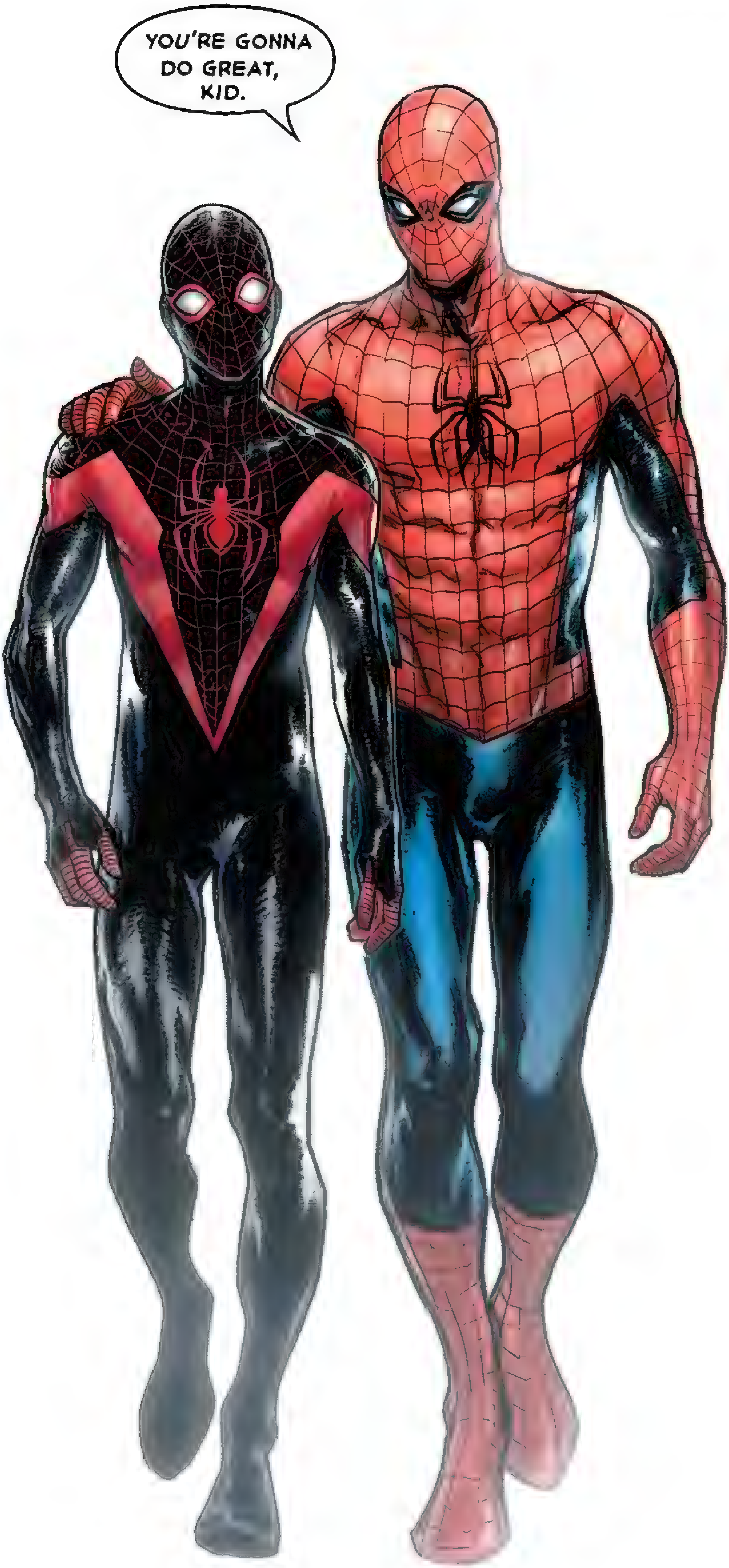
SECRET WARS #8 VARIANT BY SIYA OUM

SECRET WARS #8 VARIANT BY GREG HILDEBRANDT

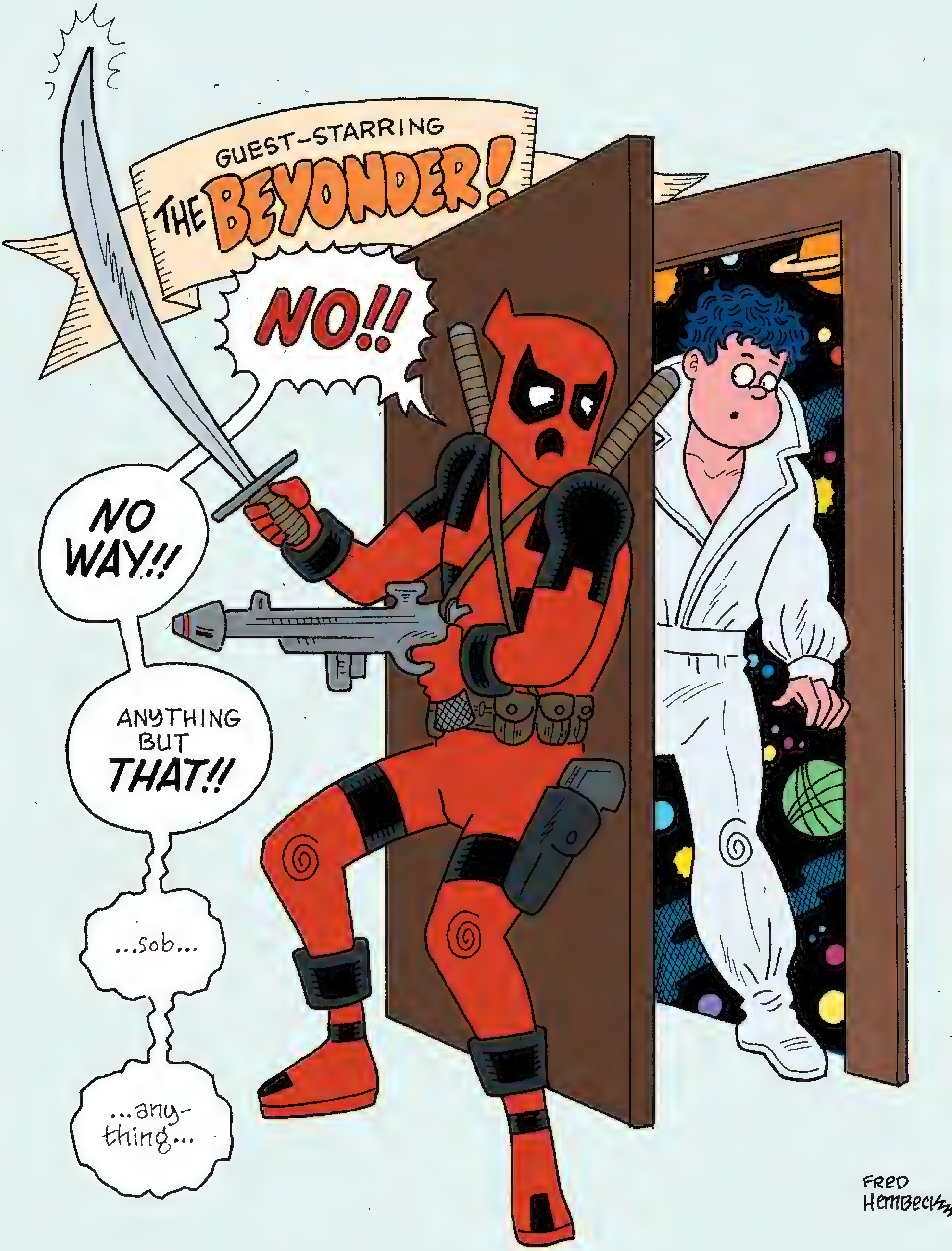
GREG HILDEBRANDT

SECRET WARS #9 VARIANT BY
SIMONE BIANCHI & SIMONE PERUZZI

SECRET WARS #9 VARIANT BY
SARA PICHELLI & JASON KEITH


YOU'RE GONNA DO GREAT, KID.

SECRET WARS #9 VARIANT BY FRED HEMBECK & RACHELLE ROSENBERG


GUEST-STARRING
THE BEYONDER!
NO!!
NO WAY!!
ANYTHING BUT THAT!!
...sob...
...any-thing...
FRED HEMBECK

SY
15

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A
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CAPTAIN AMERICA
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and his
SECRET SHIELD™
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FALCON
/124-550

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DAREDEVIL
/318-523

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/256-720

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and his
SECRET SHIELD™
Genius inventor leads Marvel Super Villains™ into battle!
DOCTOR DOOM
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SECRET WARS #9 ACTION FIGURE VARIANT BY JOHN TYLER CHRISTOPHER

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